

EA No. MT064-04-018

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (EA)

**Grazing Guidelines Implementation
(Standards for Rangeland Health)
and
Grazing permit/lease renewals
for
Bears Paw to Missouri River Breaks Grazing Allotments**

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Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) and Decision Record (DR)

FONSI

The Bureau of Land Management, Havre Field Station in coordination with BLM's Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument, have completed an environmental assessment (EA) for Grazing Guidelines implementation and grazing permit/lease renewals in the Bears Paw to Breaks grazing allotment area. The EA, #MT064-04-018, is available for review at the Bureau of Land Management office in Havre, Montana.

Based on the information in this EA, including the explanation and resolution of any potentially significant environmental impacts, we have determined that the Proposed Action (Alternative B) is not a major federal action which will significantly affect the quality of the human environment. For this reason, an Environmental Impact Statement is not required (40 CFR 1508.13).

Public Participation

Several means of public participation were used in this analysis effort. These include public meetings for multiple watershed/landscape planning areas, direct meetings with other agencies, affected interests and interested parties. The meetings that focused specifically on the Bears Paw to Breaks area included the following; October 20, 1999 - Public meeting at the Cleveland School, November 1999 - Standards for Rangeland Health assessment tour as follow up to October 1999 meeting, January 2000 - Cow Creek/Bullwhacker Transportation Plan working group meeting - February 24, 2004 Big Sandy, MT general public meeting.

In addition, BLM grazing permittees/leasees were informed and had the opportunity to comment regarding the project throughout the process. The draft EA went out for 30 day comment in June 2004. Comments received specific to the proposed action were reviewed for substantive content, then brought forward into the analysis of the EA as it was scaled back to only addressing Rangeland Health and renewal of grazing permits/leases. A total of three comment letters were received from public and one phone call was documented. These comments and responses can be found in Chapter 5, pg. 24.

DECISION RECORD

Based on the analysis and recommendations of BLM's interdisciplinary resource specialists as outlined in EA #MT064-04-018, it is our decision to select the Proposed Action (Alternative B)-

1. Renew ten year grazing permits/leases for 63 grazing allotments within the Bears Paw to Breaks area.
2. Implement grazing guidelines for allotments found not meeting rangeland health standards including; 1) construct four separate livestock fences, 2) adjust grazing authorizations on 36 allotments and class of stock on three allotments 3) inserting additional terms and conditions on grazing permit renewals to address Rangeland Health.

The action will be implemented with the following measures:

- ❖ Site specific field surveys for cultural resources will be conducted for range improvements prior to the start of project.
- ❖ Rangeland monitoring will focus on those allotments found not meeting standards. The monitoring data will be evaluated to determine whether progress is being made in meeting standards.
- ❖ Grazing permit renewals will include additional terms and conditions on the ten year permit/lease to address Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for livestock grazing management.

We have reviewed and considered public comments received. We have determined that the Proposed Action is in conformance with the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 and the West HiLine Resource Management Plan (1988) and the Interim Guidance for the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument.

Rationale

We have selected the Proposed Action because it best meets the purpose and need listed for the project under Chapter 1-Purpose and Need (pg.-5). We reached this decision after careful analysis for the effects of the two alternatives presented in the EA. The decision to implement the proposed action best meets the overall goals of Standards for Rangeland Health, Grazing Guideline Implementation and renewal of grazing permits as fully processed (NEPA). This proposed action is determined to be in the public interest and does not result in any undue or unnecessary environmental degradation. Continued monitoring will be basis of determining if goals are being met and if and when management changes are required.

Stanley Jaynes
Assistant Field Manager
Havre Field Station

12/16/04
Date

Gary Slagel
Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument Manager

12/21/04
Date

Appeal Procedure

This decision is subject to appeal. You have the right to appeal to the Interior Board of Land Appeals, Office of the Secretary, in accordance with the regulations of 43 CFR, Part 4. In order for your appeal to be considered timely, it must be received within 30 days from December 22, 2004. If an appeal is taken, you must follow the procedures outlined in BLM's form 1842-1, Information on Taking Appeals to the Board of Land Appeals. The appellant has the burden of showing that the decision appealed from is in error.

The Decision will become effective on January 25, 2005 unless a petition for a stay of the Decision is filed timely together with a Notice of Appeal (see section 43 CFR 4.21 (a)). The provisions of 43 CFR 4.21 (b) defines the standards and procedures for filing a petition to obtain a stay pending appeal.

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Appendix A-Standards Summary Determinations and Proposed Action

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West HiLine

Interim Guidance for the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument

1.0 PURPOSE & NEED

1.1 Introduction

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has prepared this Environmental Assessment (EA) to analyze implementation of Guidelines for livestock grazing and renewal of grazing permits/leases for the Bears Paw to Breaks area. This EA does not cover implementation of travel or fire management. The EA will assist the BLM in project planning and ensuring compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and in making a determination as to whether any “significant” impacts could result from the analyzed actions. “Significance” is defined in NEPA and is found in regulation 40 CFR 1508.27. An EA provides evidence for determining whether to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or a statement of “Finding of No Significant Impact” (FONSI). A Decision Record (DR), which includes a FONSI statement, is a document that briefly presents the reasons why implementation of the proposed action will not result in “significant” environmental impacts (effects) beyond those already addressed in West HiLine Resource Management Plan 1988. If the decision maker determines that this project has “significant” impacts following the analysis in the EA, then an EIS would be prepared for the project. If not, a Decision Record may be signed for the EA approving the alternative selected.

1.2 Background

The analysis area includes approximately 240,000 acres of BLM managed lands between the Missouri River and the Bears Paw Mountains. A portion of these lands, approximately 170,000 acres or 70%, also lie within the BLM’s Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument (UMRBNM). In addition, the area also includes some isolated forest tracts within the Bears Paw Mountains and some isolated tracts upstream to the mouth of the Marias River. (See overview map of the Bears Paw to Breaks area)

A total of 108 BLM grazing allotments in the analysis area were assessed to determine if they are meeting the Standards for Rangeland Health. The following is a summary of Standards for Rangeland Health identified for the Lewistown Field Office and Havre Field Station.

STANDARD #1: Uplands are in proper functioning condition.

STANDARD #2: Riparian and wetland areas are in proper functioning condition.

STANDARD #3: Water quality meets Montana State standards.

STANDARD #4: Air quality meets Montana State standards.

STANDARD #5: Habitats are provided to maintain healthy, productive and diverse populations of native plant and animal species, including special status species (federally threatened, endangered, candidate or Montana species of special concern defined in BLM Manual 6840, Special Status Species Management).

Twelve (12) allotments are not currently permitted for grazing use. These are small tracts of public land (15-40 acres) where grazing does not occur, is impractical to graze, or there isn’t a current authorization to graze. Forty seven (47) of the allotments are either partly or entirely within the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument (UMRBNM).

There are 63 grazing permits/leases associated with the allotments and these permits would be analyzed for renewal. Twenty nine (29) of the permits/leases are within or partially within the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument (UMRBNM).

1.3 Need and Purpose of the Proposed Action

The BLM proposes to renew the 10-year term grazing permits/leases and include guidelines for livestock grazing in the terms and conditions in order to meet the Standards for Rangeland Health. The BLM's evolving emphasis on sustainable production and multiple-use while maintaining intact, natural functioning systems has increased the need for the BLM to evaluate public land resource conditions or "health". In turn, to fully process the renewal of 10-year term grazing permits and leases, an Environmental Assessment must be prepared in accordance with BLM's policy and the grazing permit or lease must comply with grazing regulations 43 CFR 4180 - Fundamentals of Rangeland Health and Standards and Guidelines for Grazing Administration. This involves field assessments of grazing allotments and subsequent determinations of whether the Standards for Rangeland Health are being met, and implementing guidelines for grazing authorizations to ensure Standards will be met or are making progress in meeting Standards (43 CFR 4180.1). Where there has been a determination that Standards are not being met and the cause was livestock grazing, a change in livestock management would be needed (43 CFR 4180.2). These actions can include, changing seasons of use, stocking rate, duration of grazing, and/or range improvement projects (fences, stock water etc.).

Refer to **Appendix A** for a summary of assessment findings for Rangeland Health Standards for all allotments in the analysis area.

1.4 Goals of the Proposed Action

Goal 1. Meet Standards for Rangeland Health as stated in 43 CFR 4180 and specifically described in Montana/Dakotas Standards for Rangeland Health (May 1997).

Objective: All allotments where livestock grazing was the cause of "not meeting Standards" will meet Standards or progress will be made toward meeting standards. All 63 grazing permits/leases will implement terms and condition that establish guidelines to ensure livestock grazing does not jeopardize meeting Standards.

Goal 2. Maintain sustainable livestock grazing on public land within the analysis area.

Objective: Maintain approximately 24,000 Animal Unit Months (AUMs) of forage for commercial use under normal climatic conditions.

1.5 Conformance with BLM Land Use Plan

The following plans call for actions that maintain or improve resource conditions on the public land and include provisions for establishing management methods and installation of improvements. Actions in this environmental assessment are consistent with these plans and are therefore tiered to the following:

Missouri River Breaks Grazing EIS 1979
West HiLine RMP/EIS 1988

Refer to **Appendix D** for applicable sections of the land use plan.

1.6 Relationship to Statutes, Regulations, or other Plans

The following regulations, executive orders, directives, and plans provide direction for management within the planning area. Actions proposed in this EA are consistent with these directives and are therefore tiered to these documents.

Revised Grazing Regulation 43 CFR 4100 (specifically 4180), October 2003

Presidential Proclamation Creating the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument, January 17, 2001

State Director's Interim Guidance for Managing the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument, June 2001

Upper Missouri National Wild and Scenic River Management Plan, update February 1993

Montana/Dakotas Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management, May 1997

Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument: Guidelines for Integrated Weed Management, 2001.

1.7 Identification of Issues

Issues were identified internally and through public scoping.

The internal issues relevant to renewal of grazing permits/leases were Standards for Rangeland Health.

1.7.1 BLM has determined that portions of public land in the analysis area do not meet Standards for Rangeland Health as established for the Montana/Dakotas in May 1997.

***Upland Health (Standard 1):** Through assessments completed from 1998-2004, it was determined that approximately 95% of the public land met the upland health standard. Of the 5% that did not meet the standard, approximately 3% was due to livestock grazing, and the remaining due to prairie dogs, energy development, roads and weeds.*

***Riparian Health (Standard 2):** Through field assessments approximately 90% of the lotic riparian communities were identified as "Functioning at Risk". These communities rated this way due to physical site characteristic (landform-geology) and outside influences beyond the control of on site management actions. Outside influences include dams, ice and dewatering. Because these communities do not have potential to rate higher, they are meeting their potential and therefore are meeting the riparian health Standard. Approximately 8% of the lotic riparian communities rated in "Proper Function Condition". The remaining communities did not meet this standard due to weed infestations, livestock grazing and recreational activities.*

***Bio-diversity and Habitat (Standard 5):** Through the assessment process, there were several instances where this standard was not met because of weed infestations and other activities including, prairie dog expansion and habitat fragmentation from intermingled public/private land.*

Public scoping was carried out through public meetings and individual meetings with various agencies, local government and interested publics. From these scoping activities, issues were collected and are summarized as follows:

1.7.2 ECONOMICS - BLM grazing permittees expressed concern about the potential impact to the local economy as it relates to the future of livestock grazing on public land. Specifically, what affect will BLM's changing emphasis, including Standards for Rangeland Health, have on grazing in the local area?

1.7.3 WILDLIFE HABITAT - There was public concern that uses occurring on the public land could be jeopardizing habitat for sensitive species and wildlife in general. Wildlife may be vulnerable to ongoing and future activities that might occur on the public land (including but not limited to grazing, energy development and uncontrolled recreation activities). Greater sage grouse year-round habitat is present within the analysis area and there is concern about the populations being influenced by current uses or what might occur from changes in use.

1.8 Issues identified in scoping, which are not within the scope of this EA.

The public has expressed concerns about the risks to property and natural resources from wildland fire and BLM's approach and response to wildland fires. This issue was initially addressed through a comprehensive evaluation and subsequent fire planning effort in the Lewistown Field Office.

Public demand for recreation use of the public land has increased notably in recent years. These issues will be addressed in the UMRBNM ongoing Resource Management Planning (RMP) effort.

Accelerated energy exploration and development is occurring in this area. This issue is being addressed within the UMRBNM planning effort and/or by individual Environmental Assessments (EA).

Though not a substantial commercial source, wood product harvesting is important to local residents, particularly for fire wood uses. Small-scale sales would be considered in individual Environmental Assessments.

Jurisdiction responsibilities between agencies where public land, "submarginal" lands and private land owned by Fort Belknap co-mingle, has led to occasional discrepancies in administration and law enforcement. This is most often in reference to hunting regulations. This is outside the scope of this action.

Most access to public land is dependant on the good will of private landowners that control access points. This issue is deferred to the UMRBNM planning effort and/or cooperative efforts and individual Environmental Assessments.

The impact of Off Highway Vehicle (OHV) travel and motorized vehicle travel on existing roads and trails within the Monument will be addressed in the ongoing Monument Resource Management Plan . Public land outside the Monument will continue to be managed under Montana’s State OHV plan and specific travel management planning for areas will be formally addressed in future planning efforts.

Interest exists for the sale or exchange of small isolated tracts of public land, which provide little public benefit, in exchange for consolidating public land or securing access to public land. Within this analysis area, twelve to twenty sections of State land are either wholly or substantially surrounded by public land. Exchanges are not within the scope of this action.

1.9 Decision to be Made

The decision to be made is whether to renew 10-year term grazing permits and implement grazing guidelines, including several rangeland improvement projects to meet the Standards for Rangeland Health.

The UMRBNM Manager and Havre Field Station Manager will have the official responsibility for the decision record because the analysis area affects BLM lands both inside and outside the national monument. Though the analysis area includes BLM managed lands it has two separate delegations of authorities.

2.0 DESCRIPTION OF ALTERNATIVES, INCLUDING PROPOSED ACTION

2.1 Introduction

Alternatives developed need to ensure that Standards for Rangeland Health will be met, or are making progress toward meeting the standards, while maintaining a sustainable livestock industry and not jeopardizing wildlife habitat.

2.2 Common to All Alternatives

The Noxious Weed Management Plan for the Lewistown District (1992) and Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument: Guidelines for Integrated Weed Management (2001) provide guidance and direction in applying the principals of integrated weed management (IWM). IWM is a systems approach to managing invasive plants through a variety of control methods (biological, chemical, physical, and cultural) along with early detection, education and prevention activities. The implementation of these plans would continue to help BLM maintain the health and productivity of public lands.

Regardless of which alternative is implemented, vegetative and erosion monitoring activities would be pursued based on resource values and recognized management goals for the public land. Monitoring activities would focus on specific allotment objectives or areas to confirm whether management actions are achieving the desired effect. If monitoring indicates that an objective would not be met, it would be used as a basis to make future adjustments in management.

Refer to **Appendix A** for the monitoring activity proposed on each grazing allotment.

2.3 Alternative A - No Action

In this alternative, grazing permits would not be renewed. This would eventually eliminate BLM's authorized grazing within the analysis area during the next 10 years. In some instances, this could lead to discontinuing maintenance of some range projects and/or removal of others that were constructed to accommodate livestock grazing.

Although this alternative would bring about change on those allotments where existing grazing management practices have been identified as a causal factor for failing to achieve the Standards for Rangeland Health, it has the potential for long-term impacts on the local economy. Also, the residual value of investments in range improvements by permittees and the public would be lost.

2.4 Alternative B – Proposed Action

The Proposed Action is comprised of the following; Renew 63 ten-year term grazing permits/leases for 96 currently authorized allotments (10 additional allotments would be available for grazing if a qualified operator applies for grazing and two will remain unallocated) within the Bears Paw to Breaks analysis area. BLM would incorporate grazing guidelines for all allotments found not meeting rangeland health standards and incorporate Standards for Rangeland Health in all grazing permits/leases. Four separate fences would be constructed for a total of approximately five miles of fence. Grazing authorizations will be adjusted on 36 allotments by either changing season, adjusting stocking or specifying a grazing rotation. Class of livestock will change for three allotments

Fence Projects Proposed

- 1) Three miles of electric fence would be constructed within the Hay Coulee allotment to prevent livestock from drifting onto public land. The electric fence would consist of two wires, one electrically charged and one ground, both attached to fiberglass posts spaced approximately 60 feet apart. The fence would be located in T26N, R21E, Section 34 and T25N, R21E, Section 3.
- 2) Construct a short drift fence in the Northeast Pasture of the Golf Bench allotment to prevent livestock drift into the Black Coulee allotment. This fence would be a permanent 4-wire barbed wire fence approximately 100 feet long. The fence would be constructed according to BLM standards to mitigate barriers to wildlife movement including appropriate wire spacing. Steel posts would be used for the main span and treated wood posts will be used for all corner set posts and gates. The fence would be located in T23N, R18E, Section 31.
- 3) Install a temporary electric fence around existing crested wheatgrass seedings in the Golf Bench allotment to improve grazing use by livestock during the spring. The fence would be approximately 2500 feet in length and constructed of single strand poly wire about 30 inches above ground using fiberglass posts set 50 feet apart. This fence would be installed and removed annually. The fence would be located in T23N, R17E, Section 2.
- 4) Remove and salvage approximately 1.4 miles of existing barbed wire fence and construct 1.3 miles of new boundary fence in the Right Coulee Pasture of the Bullwhacker Allotment. The new fence would be a permanent 4-wire barbed wire fence. The fence would be constructed according to BLM standards to mitigate barriers to wildlife movement. The project area is located in T25N, R21E, Sections 6, 7 and 17.

Adjust Grazing Use Dates and Class of Stock

The class of Livestock on three allotments will be changed from cattle to horse use. These three allotments are 6175, 6178, and 6275. These three allotments have had historic horse use, and all three met the Standards for Rangeland Health. Terms and conditions will be added to these authorizations to mitigate any impacts of horse grazing on public land and the grazing season would be shortened to a summer grazing authorization.

Grazing authorizations will be adjusted on 36 allotments. Most of these are shortening of grazing seasons to reflect the actual season of use where others include terms and conditions to rotate seasons of use from year to year.

Grazing Permit Renewal -Added Terms and Conditions

For the grazing permits/leases of the allotments in the affected area, additional terms and conditions will be included that address Standards for Rangeland Health as established in 43 CFR 4180. For Example, “*The terms and conditions of this grazing permit may be modified if additional information indicates that revision is necessary to meet the Standards for Rangeland Health as described in 43 CFR 4180*”. In addition, the Grazing Guidelines for the Lewistown Field Office and Havre Field Station will be implemented for individual allotments to meet conditions based on the summary findings and rangeland health determinations. Refer to **Appendix C** for a listing of the guidelines. The terms and conditions would incorporate the following considerations:

- Grazing authorizations would stipulate use according to Allotment Management Plans (AMPs) that incorporate allotment specific goals and objectives and prescriptions that would meet Standards.

- Grazing authorizations would specify seasons and numbers of livestock use and contain specific terms and conditions outlining how grazing could occur. This could include seasons of use, duration of grazing, a grazing rotation, and limitations on use levels, supplementation practices, and flexibility in grazing prescription.

- Allotments that have minimal public resource values or are impractical for specific public land management prescriptions would have seasons of use and stocking defined with terms and conditions stating that Standards would need to be met. These would be referred to as “custodial authorizations” and generally include lands that have small acreage. For example; Custodial terms and conditions. “*This authorization is for the recognized capacity of the public land. Grazing use is approved during the listed season as long as Standards for Rangeland Health (43 CFR 4180) and land use plan objectives are being met.*”

- The allotment permittee would be required to perform normal maintenance on the range improvements to which he/she is assigned responsibilities as part of signed cooperative agreements

Refer to **Appendix A** for the listing of allotments and specific proposed actions.

2.5 Alternatives Considered but Eliminated from Further Analysis

An alternative was considered that would have gone beyond simply implementing guidelines for livestock grazing to meet the Standards for Rangeland Health. In this alternative, other range improvements (water developments, prescription burning etc) would be implemented to meet specific resource goals for livestock or wildlife or fire management. This alternative is not being carried forward in this EA in recognition that a more comprehensive analysis is necessary to fully consider the environmental effects of these actions.

3.0 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

3.1 Introduction

Chapters 1 and 2 of this EA have outlined the background for implementation of guidelines for livestock grazing and areas of concern related to this action. Chapter 3 will discuss the affected environment in general and more specifically in those areas where issues of concern were identified.

3.2 General Setting

Following is a summary of the environment. Details of the environment can be found in the Missouri Breaks Grazing EIS 1979, Chapter 2, pages 2-1 thru 2-91.

This analysis area is mostly in southern Blaine and northeastern Chouteau County with a small portion in southeast Hill County. There are approximately 240,000 acres of public land in the area mostly in a block along the Missouri River and extending up Cow Creek and Bullwhacker Coulee. The area also includes scattered and various sized blocks and isolated tracts of public land in the Birch Creek and Black Coulee watershed and along the north side corridor of the Missouri River from Loma downstream to the mouth of Birch Creek .

The landscape encompasses the Bears Paw Mountains and foothills through the Missouri Breaks along Cow Creek, Bullwhacker Coulee, Black Coulee, Birch Creek and public lands upstream along the Missouri River to Loma. The Cow Creek /Bullwhacker area, where most of the public land exists, is eroded sedimentary plains leaving very rough and deeply incised canyons with rolling upland ridges in between.

Soils and Vegetation Resources

Soils in the headwaters of the watersheds are well developed and highly productive; where as most of the soils on public lands in the breaks are generally high in clay with high erosion hazard and low infiltration capability. Some of the landscape has naturally eroded to rugged topography interspersed with benches and rolling hills. Badlands support little vegetation because of steep terrain, shale and rock outcroppings, and the abundance of heavy clays.

Upland native vegetation in the breaks area is a mosaic of sagebrush/grasslands, juniper and some conifer communities. Community mosaic coincides with changes in soils/parent material, exposure and effective precipitation as well as other influences of fire (or lack of fire) and management activities. Sagebrush/grassland communities occur throughout the landscape on ridges and slopes, and are comprised of Wyoming big sagebrush with wheatgrasses, but also include silver sagebrush, rabbit brush, needle grasses, blue gramma, fringed sagewort and other

mixed prairie species. These communities account for most of the forage resources that wildlife and livestock use in the area.

Overall, forest communities on the public land within the Bears Paw Mountains are generally healthy. Forested stands are Douglas-fir climax habitat types. Most have an abundance of lodgepole pine with Douglas-fir only beginning to occupy the site in small clumps of advanced regeneration. The common understory vegetation is a variety of shrubs, forbs and grasses. In addition, some aspen occur throughout some stands.

The four main forest types that exist in the Breaks are ponderosa pine, Douglas fir, juniper, and mixed hardwoods. Aside from riparian forest communities, the forests in the Breaks minimally meet criteria of being considered “forests”, and therefore traditional forest health ratings are not applicable. There are isolated stands, which have blow downs, bug kill, and overstocking, etc., which would be evaluated and addressed through hazardous fuels management.

Riparian Resources

Riparian plant communities are of specific concern in the analysis area. Of the 103 miles of Missouri River frontage, approximately half is in public ownership. There is very little public land river frontage in the upper river segment. However, approximately 25 miles upstream from the PN Bridge, continuous frontage of public land begins with interspersed segments of private land downstream to the mouth of Cow Creek.

Aside from along the Missouri River, there are Lotic (flowing water) riparian communities along Cow Creek, Suction Creek, Birch Creek, Eagle Creek, Bullwhacker Coulee and occasional segments along other coulees on public lands. On private lands in the upper reaches of the watersheds, some well-developed riparian communities can be found.

Riparian areas are defined as land directly influenced by permanent water. It has visible vegetation or physical characteristics reflective of permanent water influence. Lakeshores and stream banks are typical riparian areas. Excluded are such sites as ephemeral streams or washes that do not exhibit the presence of vegetation dependent upon free water in the soil (*Reference: BLM Montana State Office August 1997 Montana/Dakotas Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management*). Riparian community health is rated by indicators of hydrologic, erosion and vegetation in the community.

In this analysis area, the combination of relatively new landscape, highly erosive soils and erratic precipitation limit the potential to establish highly developed riparian communities. As assessed from 1995-2003, approximately eighty (80) miles of lotic riparian communities were identified as functional at risk. However, because of the nature of the community, naturally occurring influences, weeds and how the ratings are determined, it is unlikely they would have the potential or capability of rating in proper functioning condition (PFC).

There were ten (10) miles of proper functioning (PFC) condition riparian areas identified on public land in the analysis area. These communities occur where the gradient of the landscape is low and relatively wide and/or other factors are favorable. Riparian communities on the river edge are substantially influenced by upstream dams, ice and water fluctuation, livestock grazing, and recreation activities. Off river riparian areas (springs, seeps, etc.) may be more influenced by livestock use.

Visual Resource Management (VRM)

Visual resource inventories were completed in the project area during the Missouri Breaks Grazing EIS (1979). The analysis area (Bears Paw to Breaks) lies within three VRM categories; Class I, II, and IV. Two of the fence projects, the Hay Coulee Allotment electric fence and the salvage and new fence construction in the Bullwhacker Allotment, lie within the Class II category, where management activities may be seen but should not attract the attention of the casual observer. The Golf Bench Allotment drift fence and crested wheatgrass fence are located within a Class IV category. Management activities in this area may dominate the view and may be the major focus of the viewer's attention. Rangeland improvements, such as fences, reservoirs, wells, pipelines and other water developments are common features on the landscape in all the project areas.

Travel by vehicles is currently restricted to existing roads and trails. During fence construction, off-road travel will be permitted to access the projects. Blading, brush removal and cutting and filling slopes would not be authorized.

The fence projects will be seen by the casual observer and every effort will be taken to assure the visual resource concerns are met. The fences will be constructed using wooden brace posts and all steel posts will be painted green. These materials are common to other fences in the surrounding area.

Invasive and Non-Native Plants

Invasive and non-native plants are found throughout the planning area to varying degrees. Noxious plants (those invasive plant species which have legal requirements for management) are mainly found along the river corridor and on river bottoms. A few infestations do occur in creeks and/or coulees far from the river. There are ten species of noxious weeds that occur in the area and several other invasive plant species that are of some concern. Russian knapweed (*Centaurea repens*), Canada thistle (*Cirsium arvense*), and leafy spurge (*Euphorbia esula*) are the dominate weedy species present and occur abundantly along the Missouri River Corridor. Other noxious weed species which occur in isolated infestations or have been reported and eradicated include: spotted knapweed (*Centaurea maculosa*), perennial pepperweed (*Lepidium latifolium*), field bindweed (*Convolvulus arvensis*), houndstongue (*Cynoglossum officinale*), purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*), Dalmatian toadflax (*Linaria dalmatica*), and salt cedar or tamarisk (*Tamarix spp.*). Other invasive species of concern in the area include: black henbane (*Hysocymus niger*), Russian olive (*Elaeagnus angustifolia*), and poison hemlock (*Conium maculatum*).

Wildlife & Fisheries Resources

The complex of Breaks – plains – mountain foothills - sagebrush – grasslands and scattered forest communities provides a variety of habitat for numerous wildlife species. Pronghorn antelope, mule and white-tailed deer, bighorn sheep, elk, sharp-tail and greater-sage grouse are considered important management species and all have crucial winter habitat and fawning, calving, or breeding/nesting habitat within the analysis area. Mule and white-tailed deer are widespread throughout the area season long. Elk are found in increasing numbers within the area as well as bighorn sheep along the breaks area. Pronghorn antelope are common in the upland plains.

Other resident mammals include mountain lions, bobcats, coyotes, red fox, badger, cottontail rabbits, jackrabbits, various species of mice, voles, prairie dogs, and ground squirrels.

There is habitat for several raptor species including golden eagle, prairie falcon, kestrel, red-tailed hawk, great horned owl, ferruginous hawk, and Swainson's hawk.

Fisheries exist year around in the upper reaches of Cow Creek, Suction Creek, Birch Creek and Eagle Creek on private land, in the Missouri River and in stocked reservoirs. Pallid Sturgeon (endangered) is known to live in the Missouri River along this reach and there are ongoing efforts to monitor populations and trends.

Threatened, Endangered Wildlife & Plants, and Species Proposed for Listing (T&E)

Bald Eagle (Threatened) nests are known at two locations in the watershed. Both are along the Missouri River on private land. Eagles are known to winter in the analysis area, and are frequently seen during spring and fall migrations.

Pallid Sturgeon (Endangered) reside in the Missouri River and there are ongoing efforts to study populations and trends.

Black-Footed Ferrets (Endangered) are associated with prairie dog towns and have been reintroduced in south Phillips County. None have been reintroduced into the analysis area or existing towns and habitat is not considered adequate for supporting ferrets.

There are no known Threatened and /or Endangered plant species within the analysis area.

BLM Designated Sensitive Species (SS)

In the analysis area, there is habitat for several BLM Designated Sensitive Species. This category of species is approved by the Montana State Director for BLM Montana, and in combination with T&E species comprises Special Status Species (SSS). Refer to **Appendix B** - Special Status Species Affects Determinations and Summary tables for a complete listing.

For those species identified within the analysis area, selection of these alternatives will not remove any important or substantial habitat or individuals within the populations, which might lead to the need to list any sensitive species (SS) under the Endangered Species Act.

Reptiles and amphibians have not been surveyed but species common to the area include prairie rattlesnake, bull snake, garter snake, racer, short-horned lizard (SS), northern leopard frog (SS), hog-nosed snake (SS), and tiger salamander (SS).

Migratory Birds

These are species protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (16 USC 703 - 711). The Migratory Bird Treaty Act protects all migratory birds including BLM designated Sensitive Species. There are approximately 233 species of birds occurring seasonally within the analysis area. The majority of these species are migratory species.

3.3 Critical Elements of the Human Environment

Critical elements of the human environment, as identified in statute, regulation or executive order, have been considered for this environmental assessment. Those elements that may be impacted are discussed within this EA. Elements not affected by this action are identified with rationale for not analyzing them further.

Table 1

Critical Element	Affected	Rationale
Air Quality	No	Continued livestock grazing would not affect air quality.
Threatened or Endangered Species	No	See Appendix B
Floodplains	No	Floodplains along the Missouri River and accessory streams would not be effected negatively. Guidelines for livestock grazing are specifically intended to improve riparian communities and adjoining uplands.
Prime/Unique Farm Lands	No	Resource is not present
Water Quality (Surface and Ground)	No	Continued livestock grazing in accordance with guidelines would not negatively affect water quality.
Cultural Resources	No	Cultural resources are present in the area. Livestock grazing in itself would not degrade cultural resource values. Avoidance/mitigating measures will be implemented where sites for range improvements would impact cultural sites.
Wetland/Riparian Zones	Yes	Implementation of grazing guidelines is specifically intended to improve riparian community health where livestock are an influence.
Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC)	No	The Cow Creek ACEC extends along the eastern side of this analysis area. Proposed actions in this EA would not affect values for which the ACEC was designated.
Wilderness/Wilderness Study Areas (WSA)	No	Parts of the Cow Creek and all of the Ervin Ridge and Stafford WSAs are within this analysis area. Implementation of livestock grazing guidelines will not jeopardize any consideration for Wilderness designation or interim guidelines for WSA management.
Wild and Scenic Rivers	No	The Missouri River along the southern boundary of this planning area was designated a Wild and Scenic river in 1976. Implementation of livestock grazing guidelines will not degrade resource values of the Wild and Scenic River.
Native American Religious Concerns	No	Implementation of livestock grazing guidelines would not jeopardize any special religious values to Native Americans.

Wastes, Hazardous or Solid	No	Resource is not present
Environmental Justice	No	Minority and low-income concerns would not be unequally affected by implementation of livestock grazing guidelines.
Invasive, Non-native Species	Yes	Knapweeds, leafy spurge, Canada thistle, perennial pepperweed, field bindweed, houndstongue, purple loosestrife, Dalmatian toadflax and salt cedar are present in the planning area mostly along the Missouri River and along some coulees. Implementation of livestock grazing guidelines would improve the health of plant communities and provide some resistance to invasive species.

3.3.1 Resource/Issue 1 - Standards for Rangeland Health

Standards for Rangeland Health, established in 1995, are assessments of the functionality of the ecosystem and ecological processes on the land (43 CFR 4180). Specific Standards for the local area were established in the Montana/Dakotas Standards for Rangeland Health, May 1997. The following is a brief summary of all standards assessed for the analysis area:

1. Uplands are in proper functioning condition: Through assessments completed since 1998, it was determined that approximately 95% of the public land met the upland standard. Of the 5% that did not meet the standard, approximately 3% was due to livestock grazing, and the remaining due to prairie dogs, energy development, roads and weeds.
2. Riparian and wetland areas are in proper functioning condition: Through field assessments approximately 90% of the lotic riparian communities were identified as “Functioning at Risk”. These communities rated this way due to physical site characteristic (landform-geology) and outside influences beyond the control of on site management actions. Outside influences include dams, ice and dewatering. Because these communities do not have potential to rate higher, they are meeting their potential and therefore are meeting the riparian health Standard. Approximately 8% of the lotic riparian communities rated in “Proper Function Condition”. The remaining communities did not meet this standard due to weed infestations, livestock grazing and recreational activities.
3. Water quality meets Montana State Standards: Water quality was not specifically measured in the analysis area. Healthy functioning upland and riparian communities would help to meet water quality standards.
4. Air quality meets Montana State Standards: Air quality was not specifically measured in the analysis area. No direct influence on air quality is caused by the grazing that occurs on the public land in the area.
5. Habitats are provided to maintain healthy, productive and diverse populations of native plants and animal species, including special status species: In the assessment process, there were concerns that this standard was not met because of weed infestations and activities that might jeopardize wildlife habitat. This concern was also expressed outside of the Standards

determination process and was specifically noted for greater sage-grouse habitat fragmentation and winter forage for big game.

Determinations of Standards have been made on an allotment basis and summarized in Appendix A.

3.3.2 Resource/Issue 2 - Livestock Operations and Local Economy

The primary agricultural activity in the area is cow-calf livestock operations with some yearling cattle occurring mostly during the spring - fall season. Domestic sheep are not authorized on the public land and only small infrequent farm flocks are kept on private land. Most ranches have a few saddle horses and only three have horse raising components to their operations. In the western part of the area, more of the private land in the uplands is devoted to small grain production.

There are 63 grazing permits/leases in the analysis area. These permits (plus unallocated allotments) encompass 108 grazing allotments. In total, there are 24,397 AUMs of forage authorized in permits/leases on the public land. (This represents the total qualified and allocated forage. Actual active and authorized use may differ from year to year based on conditions and nature of the livestock operation.)

Of the 108 allotments, twenty-nine (29) are altogether within the UMRBNM and another eighteen (18) are split by the monument boundary. In addition, of the sixty-three (63) grazing permits/leases, twenty-nine (29) are either altogether in the Monument or split by the monument boundary.

3.3.3 Resource/Issue 3 – Wildlife/ T&E/ SS

Threatened, Endangered, or Species Proposed for listing

Bald Eagle (Threatened) nests are known at two locations in the watershed. Both are along the Missouri River on private land. Eagles are known to winter in the analysis area, and are frequently seen during spring and fall migrations.

Pallid Sturgeon (Endangered) resides in the Missouri River and there are ongoing efforts to study populations and trend.

Black-Footed Ferrets (Endangered) are associated with prairie dog towns and have been reintroduced in south Phillips County. None have been reintroduced into the analysis area or existing towns and habitat is not considered adequate for supporting ferrets.

BLM Designated Sensitive Species

In the analysis area, there is habitat for the following Sensitive Species. For those species listed below, selection of these alternatives will not remove any important or substantial habitat or individuals within the populations, which might lead to the need to list any BLM designated Sensitive Species under the Endangered Species Act.

Greater sage-grouse have been petitioned for listing under the Endangered Species Act, and utilize the analysis area. Greater sage-grouse live yearlong in portions of the analysis area.

Wintering areas for sage-grouse are generally known, as well as approximately 12-lek areas. Sage-grouse are susceptible to disturbance during breeding and nesting, and loss of sagebrush. BLM regulations require sage-grouse habitat to be managed to assure that sage-grouse will not need to be listed through the Endangered Species Act.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has determined that substantial biological information exists to warrant a more in-depth examination of the status of greater sage-grouse. This finding will commence with a full status review of the species. Once the review is complete, the Service will determine whether to propose listing the species as either threatened or endangered. The Service has completed its evaluation of three petitions to list the greater sage-grouse range wide as either threatened or endangered. The Service has determined that the petitions, and other available information, provide substantial biological information indicating that further review of the status of the species is warranted. This process, which includes a request for input from the public, should be completed within 12 months of receiving the petitions.

The black-tailed prairie dog occur within the planning area. Existing prairie dog towns within the planning area may provide habitat for mountain plover (not documented) and burrowing owl, which are BLM Sensitive Species. There are approximately 21 prairie dog towns (2001 data), which are known to occur wholly or partially on BLM lands within the planning area. The most common area for black-tailed prairie dog towns is in the Birch Creek/Chase Hill and Eight Mile Bench areas, mostly on private land. Small-scattered and isolated prairie dog towns occur in other portions of the planning area. Above the Stafford Ferry area along the river, there are several river bottom terraces that have been colonized by prairie dog towns and are leading to resource conflicts with other uses, primarily livestock grazing.

Golden eagle, Ferruginous and Swainson's hawks occur within the analysis area. Ferruginous hawks are very susceptible to disturbance while nesting and will abandon nests if disturbance occurs for more than a brief period or more than a couple times during nesting.

Loggerhead shrikes utilize brushy draws adjacent to open grasslands and are known to utilize the analysis area. Shrikes are susceptible to habitat loss.

Long-billed curlews and Baird's sparrow, Chestnut-collared Longspur, Marbled godwit, McCown's longspur, Sprague's pipit, occur in shrub/grassland sites within the analysis area. They are susceptible to vehicle strikes, habitat loss and nest disturbance.

Northern goshawk, Red-headed woodpecker, Long-legged myotis, Long-eared myotis, have been recorded within the planning area, but all have limited habitat on BLM lands. BLM lands likely contribute to the overall habitat needs of these species, but are not crucial.

Peregrine falcon historically occurred within the planning area and juveniles have been Hacked within the Missouri River Breaks. No nests have been documented within the analysis area, but BLM lands likely contribute to the overall habitat needs of this species, but are not crucial.

Greater short-horned lizard, Western hog-nosed snake inhabit badlands/breaks habitats within the analysis area. They are susceptible to new roads into badlands habitat and direct mortality from traffic on those roads.

Willet, Wilson's phalarope, Great plains toad, Plains spadefoot (frog), and Northern leopard frog would be associated with streams and wetlands associated with sagebrush/grassland or grassland

habitat within the analysis area.

Snapping turtle, Spiny softshell turtle, Blue sucker, Paddlefish, Sauger, Sicklefin chub, Sturgeon chub, occur within the Missouri River. Northern redbelly X Finescale dace, and Pearl dace are believed to occupy small tributaries to the Missouri River. There is little information about their habitat needs, populations, or upland impacts to the species, within the BLM managed area.

4.0 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

4.1 Introduction

The issues for consideration are Standards for Rangeland Health, economic livestock operations and local economy and impacts on wildlife and special status species. Impacts of the No Action and proposed action are considered for each of the issues of concern.

4.2 Direct/Indirect Impacts

4.2.1 Alternative A – No Action

4.2.1.1 Issue 1 - Standards for Rangeland Health

Alternative A would meet Standards for Rangeland health where livestock grazing was the cause of not meeting Standards in a matter of a few years. Where livestock was responsible for riparian communities not being healthy, notable improvement in community health could be anticipated. However climatic variation, exotic and invasive plants and other uses on the land (recreation, wildlife etc.) may limit the potential for improvement over time.

4.2.1.2 Issue 2 - Livestock Operations and Local Economy

Over a 10-year period, livestock grazing on the public land would be phased out. This would result in a loss of approximately 24,000 AUMs of livestock forage. It is anticipated of the 63 permits; about 30% of the operations would be seriously impacted and could be substantial enough that they would not be able to continue current operations. Another 40% of the operators would need to make notable revisions in their operations and about 30% would need to make minor revisions in their operations*. Elimination of livestock grazing is contrary to existing land use plans and foregoes being able to use livestock grazing as a management tool.

**With elimination of livestock grazing from the public land over a 10-year period, there would be adverse economic impacts on those operators that are authorized to use public land as well as the extended local and regional economy. In order to develop and estimate the anticipated impact, an overview of each permit was considered against what was commonly known about the operations. BLM does not have detailed knowledge of each operation, but the size of the public land grazing permit in Animal Unit Months (AUMs) and season of use, against the size and nature of the business of the operator allows for some assumptions of what could happen. Three broad areas were used to sort the impacts on operations; these were (1) operations that would be seriously impacted (2) operations that would need to make some revisions but would not necessarily be so serious as to have a major impact and (3) only minor revision in operation would occur. By examples: (1) if a permit for 500 AUMs for public land grazing is no longer available and the total operation is for a ranch that runs 200 cows year around (2,400 AUMs)*

the loss of 500 AUMs would be a substantial impact and cause serious impact to the operator. (2) If a permit is for 100 AUMs of fall use and the operation is a 500 cows year around (6000 AUMs) operation, the 100 AUMs loss does pose a problem and would require some adjustment but may not be a serious major impact (3) If the permit is for 50 AUMs and the operator is substantially a farming operation with only an incidental livestock operation on the side, the impact of losing 50 AUMs would likely lead to minor revisions to the operation. As with any loss to one aspect of the economy, there is a ripple effect through the rest of the local and regional economy. There is no doubt that a loss of 24,000 AUMs of public land forage would impact the local economy, but a comprehensive analysis is not useful or practical for this EA since this alternative would not be advanced as the preferred alternative. This discussion is not meant to be a precise measure of impacts but is intended to give a general idea of what could be anticipated.

4.2.1.3 Resource/Issue 3 – Wildlife/ T&E/ SS

Threatened, Endangered, or Species Proposed for listing

Bald eagle (Threatened) would not be affected by the actions this alternative.

Pallid sturgeon (Endangered) would not be affected by the actions of this alternative.

Black-footed ferrets (Endangered) do not exist in this area and would not be affected by the actions of this alternative.

There would **No Effect** on any Threatened & Endangered Species by actions of this alternative.

Appendix B provides a summary determination by species.

BLM Designated Sensitive Species

Greater Sage Grouse are susceptible to disturbance during breeding and nesting, and loss of sagebrush. BLM regulations require sage-grouse habitat be managed to assure that sage-grouse would not need to be listed through the Endangered Species Act. There should be no impact from alternative A.

Black-Tailed Prairie Dog towns exist within the analysis area may provide habitat for mountain plover (SS, not documented) and burrowing owl (SS). There would be no impact from alternative A, unless prairie dogs are allowed unlimited expansion and the total number of acres within a geographic area reduces the ecological condition enough to cause problems with rangeland health.

Ferruginous and Swainson's Hawks occur within the analysis area. Ferruginous and Swainson's hawks are very susceptible to habitat loss and nest disturbance. Alternative A would have no effect on these species.

Loggerhead Shrikes utilize brushy draws adjacent to open grasslands and are known to utilize the analysis area. Shrikes are susceptible to habitat loss. Alternative A would have no effect on this species.

Long-Billed Curlews and Baird's Sparrow occur in shrub/grassland sites within the planning

area. Curlews are susceptible to vehicle strikes, habitat loss and nest disturbance. There would be no impacts to these species.

Migratory Birds: The Migratory Bird Treaty Act protects all migratory birds including above Sensitive Status Species. Impacts are expected to be minor to all migratory species from Alternative A.

Wildlife Other

Alternative A, removal of grazing, may provide local benefits to some animals through increased forage. Without the construction and maintenance of manmade waters, habitat may be lost in some areas where standing water is the limiting factor available for wildlife during the dry seasons.

Predators, including mountain lions, bobcats, coyotes and several raptor species have viable populations within the analysis area. In Alternative A, without the construction and maintenance of man-made waters, habitat may be lost where the wildlife prey base is dependant on these developments.

Visual Resource Management

Alternative A would have no improvements or other actions that would impact visual resource values.

4.2.2 Alternative B – Proposed Action

4.2.2.1 Issue 1 - Standards for Rangeland Health

Renewal of grazing permits/leases incorporating terms and conditions including guidelines to meet Standards for Rangeland Health (especially on those allotments where livestock have been identified as a cause of not meeting Standards) would affirm necessary management to meet Standards.

4.2.2.2 Issue 2 - Permittees and the Local Economy

This alternative provides for maintaining effectively the same level of livestock grazing on the public land as currently exists and would therefore in turn have no effect on the local economy.

4.2.2.3 Issue 3 – Wildlife/ T&E/ SS

Threatened, Endangered, or Species Proposed for listing

Bald eagle (Threatened) would not be affected by the actions of this alternative.

Pallid surgeon (Endangered) would not be affected by the actions of this alternative.

Black-footed ferrets (Endangered) do not exist in this area and would not be affected by the actions of this alternative.

There would **No Effect** on any T&E species by actions of this alternative. Appendix B provides a summary determination by species.

BLM Designated Sensitive Species

Most BLM Designated Sensitive Species have no suitable habitat within the analysis area. There will be no effect on those species. In the analysis area, there is habitat for several BLM Sensitive Species, which are listed below. See Appendix B Special Status Species Affects Determinations, Summary tables. For those species listed below, selection of these alternatives will not remove any habitat or individuals, which might lead to the need to list any BLM Designated Sensitive Species under the Endangered Species Act.

Greater Sage Grouse are susceptible to disturbance during breeding and nesting, and loss of sagebrush. BLM regulations require sage-grouse habitat be managed to assure that sage-grouse would not need to be listed through the Endangered Species Act. By following the Standards for Rangeland Health, there should be no impact from this alternative.

Black-Tailed Prairie Dog towns exist within the analysis area may provide habitat for mountain plover (SS, not documented) and burrowing owl (SS). By following the Standards for Rangeland Health, there should be no impact from this alternative, unless prairie dogs are allowed unlimited expansion and the total number of acres within an allotment or geographic area reduces the ecological condition enough to jeopardize rangeland health.

Ferruginous and Swainson's Hawks occur within the analysis area. Ferruginous and Swainson's hawks are very susceptible to habitat loss and nest disturbance. This alternative could increase the prey base for ferruginous hawks if prairie dog towns are allowed to expand, and could reduce the prey base if prairie dog numbers are reduced or towns removed.

Loggerhead Shrikes utilize brushy draws adjacent to open grasslands and are known to utilize the analysis area. Shrikes are susceptible to habitat loss. This alternative would not have any impact on this species.

Long-Billed Curlews and Baird's Sparrow occur in shrub/grassland sites within the planning area. Curlews are susceptible to vehicle strikes, habitat loss and nest disturbance. For this alternative there would be no impacts to these species as long as Standards for Rangeland Health are being met.

Migratory Birds: The Migratory Bird Treaty Act protects all migratory birds including above Sensitive Species. Impacts from this alternative would occur if permitted activities disturb nesting birds, destroy nests, or because vehicle strikes occur during permitted actions. Impacts are expected to be minor to all migratory species.

Wildlife Other

Alternative B would allow use of some forage for livestock, while meeting Standards for Rangeland Health.

Predators, including mountain lions, bobcats, coyotes and several raptor species have viable populations within the planning area. Alternative B would allow for existing water developments to be maintained and preserve a sustained prey base for predators.

Visual Resource Management

The proposed action includes installation of fences in four locations for a total of approximately five miles. These fences are in Class II and IV visual resource management categories where range improvements are common features and do not attract the attention of the casual observer. Fences will be constructed in accordance with standard stipulations including natural colored posts and minimum disturbance to the landscape. Therefore this action will have no impact on visual resources.

4.3 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS ANALYSIS

4.3.1 Cumulative Impacts

Much of the Bears Paw to Breaks analysis area has soil resources that are highly susceptible to erosion. Assuring that Rangeland Health Standards are being met or progress is being made will benefit directly the vegetative resources thus, enhancing their ability to trap sediment from erosive upland soil during weather events.

Noxious weeds continue to be a spreading problem and the importance to have intact plant communities that offer some resistance to weed invasion will be an expected outcome from improved rangeland health.

Portions of the affected area will have structural improvements (fences) to allow improved control of livestock. With better controls on grazing there will be improvement of the trend and condition of the vegetation and wildlife habitat resources.

5.5 CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

5.1 Introduction

Initially when this project was outlined it was intended to be a “landscape planning” effort or “watershed plan”. At its inception varying levels of consultation were held between BLM’s Lewistown Field Office and Havre Field Station. The process for developing this EA lasted over five years with the final product directed down to only address Standards for Rangeland Health and grazing permit/lease renewals.

5.2 Persons, Groups, and Agencies Consulted

Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks- Region 6 Havre Resource Area Office.
Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (State Lands)
Fort Belknap Tribes
Hill, Chouteau, Blaine County Commissioners
Grazing permittees and lessees on major grazing allotments

5.3 Summary of Public Participation

5.3.1 Comment Analysis

Several means of scoping, issues identification and consultation/coordination were used in this analysis effort since initiation in 1999. These include:

- *Internal BLM all resource staff review
- *Public meetings for this and other watershed/landscape planning areas
- *Public meetings for the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument
- *Direct meetings with agencies
- *Direct meetings with affected interests and interested parties

Several public meetings were held during the summer of 1999 to seek public participation on issue identification and what actions BLM could pursue to accommodate the influx of recreation anticipated for the Lewis & Clark Bi-Centennial and the proposal for special designation of the public land in this planning area. Though not specifically scoping for this analysis, issues from these meetings have been considered.

October 20, 1999 - Public meeting at the Cleveland School (Cow Creek/Bullwhacker)

November 1999 - Standards assessment tour as follow up to October 1999 meeting.

January 2000 - Cow Creek/Bullwhacker Transportation Plan working group meeting (this group was established in fall of 1999)

January 2000 - Scoping suspended in recognition of the designation of the UMRBNM

Fall 1999 - Lewistown Resource Advisory Council (RAC) assumed an assignment from the Secretary of the Interior to recommend specific management for the Missouri River corridor and the breaks. The RAC provided recommendations to the Secretary in January 2000. Issues from those recommendations were considered in developing this action.

February 24, 2004 - General public meeting held in Big Sandy, MT

During scoping discussions of Monument designation, Lewis & Clark initiative(s), OHV use, and energy development other issues were identified.

5.3.2 List of Commenters

Montana Wildlife Federation
Dyrck VanHyning
Steve Funke
Olive Robinson

5.3.3 Response to Public Comment

During the comment period extending from June – July 2004 three comment letters were received and a few phone call comments and questions were received.

Following are comments received and responses:

Comment 1: Inadequate analysis of motorized use on which to make an informed decision.

Comment 2: Use of OHV registrations is not an appropriate measure of OHV use on public land.

Comment 3: Conflicts between uses verses individual users are not properly recognized.

Comment 4: A small constituency of motorized users is being limited to accommodate other uses and users almost to the extent of being prejudice.

Response to comments 1-4: At the draft stage, BLM felt that transportation plan guidance could be developed and implemented as part of this process. Approximately 70% of the public land in the Bears Paw to Breaks analysis area is part of the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument and the monument plan will address transportation planning for the monument.

Transportation planning for that area outside the monument is being deferred to a future planning document.

Comment 5 Closing of areas to motorized and non-motorized travel to protect resource values during times of wildlife vulnerability is appropriate.

Response: Travel planning and road closures will be addressed in future management plans and is therefore beyond the scope of this EA.

Comment 6: Grazing is an important overall impact and should be addressed as part of the monument planning effort.

Response: Grazing issues will be addressed as part of Standards for Rangeland Health and implementation of Guidelines for livestock grazing.

Comment 7: Inclusion of an alternative that eliminates livestock grazing is disingenuous.

Response: Inclusion of an alternative of not reissuing grazing permits is a no action alternative, which has notable consequences. It is included to document a range of alternatives for comparison purpose

Comment 8: Rangelands developed under substantial influences of animals and weather.

Response: BLM recognizes that rangelands evolved under numerous influences, however some human uses and demands may exceed the ability of rangelands to remain healthy and produce sustainable products and values expected of them.

Comment 9: Some water developments are negatively impacting mule deer and other wildlife. Water developments should come under strict review for their ramification on wildlife.

Comment 10: Livestock water facilities and subsequent grazing practices are infringing on wildlife habitat and in some cases displacing wildlife to private land.

Comment 11: Water development projects have caused livestock to use forage previously used by wildlife and resulted in a substantial (50% estimated) loss of carrying capacity for wildlife. Under NEPA rules, this new information is reason to reevaluate decisions under the RMP.

Response comments 9-11: Water developments do have the potential to change areas of use of livestock and wildlife. By developing water in some areas, it is planned to relieve livestock use in other areas and in turn benefit wildlife. Some water developments may directly benefit wildlife (bighorn sheep, elk, waterfowl, amphibians, etc). Range improvements will be analyzed for their impact on wildlife habitat and other resources on an individual basis. In keeping with guidance in the West HiLine RMP, livestock water would not be developed on terminal ridges where it would conflict with mule deer habitat needs. For BLM lands north of the Missouri River, there is no specific data to affirm a loss of carrying capacity for wildlife as a result of water developments.

Comment 12: Additional information and limitations should be incorporated to meet sage-grouse habitat needs.

Response: Guidelines established in the Management Plan and Conservation Strategies for Sage Grouse in Montana would be followed, as appropriate to vegetative potential and BLM regulations.

Comment 13: Provisions should be incorporated to allow for black-footed ferrets if they should ever expand into the planning area.

Response: There is not a reasonable expectation, nor does it exist now, that black-footed ferret habitat would develop in this area. However, if circumstances change a provision for black-footed ferrets could be considered.

Comment 14: Sage-grouse populations have gone down more from loss of sagebrush to farming and increase in predators (especially non-indigenous species such as foxes and raccoons).

Response: Multiple factors have caused sage-grouse populations to decline in parts of the west. BLM can only regulate uses that occur on public lands. Therefore, as sagebrush communities on private land are converted to farmlands, there is added emphasis on providing habitat for sage-grouse on public land.

Comment 15: Decision made on the public land in the watershed (inside and outside of the monument) should give priority to protecting the reasons for designating a national monument.

Response: The plan was developed to be consistent with the Proclamation and Interim guidance for the Monument.

Comment 16: Not clear what issues are covered by the monument RMP verses the EA.

Response: This EA addresses only Standards for Rangeland Health and grazing permit/lease renewal over the analysis area which is all the public land in south Blaine, east Chouteau, and a small part of southeast Hill counties all north of the Missouri River and south of the Bears Paw mountains. Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for livestock grazing apply equally to all the public land inside or outside of the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument.

Comment 17: Riparian community health should be taken seriously as it has implications for wildlife “objects”.

Response: Riparian health is Standard 2 of the Standards for Rangeland Health and a specific component of the goals of the plan.

Comment 18: It is not clear when sportsmen had the opportunity to participate in the planning effort.

Response: Sportsmen had the opportunity to participate in public meetings held at Cleveland, Mt. in October 1999, Big Sandy, MT in February 2004 and at a tour in November 1999. In addition, comments from sportsmen and others were gathered from personal contacts, at public meetings held for the monument planning effort, and other meetings.

5.4 List of Preparers

BLM:

Name	Title	Responsible Resources
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Louis Hagener	Team Leader-Rangeland Management Specialist	Rangeland Resources, Grazing Management
Mitch Forsyth	Rangeland Management Specialist	Rangeland Resources, Grazing Management
Steve Zellmer	Rangeland Management Specialist	Rangeland Resources, Grazing Management
Jody Peters	Wildlife Biologist	Wildlife, T & E Animal and Plant Species, Fisheries, Riparian.
Kenny Keever	Natural Resource Specialist-Weeds	Noxious and Invasive Plants
Jerry Clark	Archeologist	Cultural resources
Dave Pacioretty	Assistant Field Manager (Acting)	NEPA review and Coordinator

6.0 REFERENCE, GLOSSARY AND ACRONYMS

6.1 References

Bureau of Land Management, Montana State office, August 1997, Montana/Dakotas Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management

Bureau of Land Management, Lewistown District, 1992, Noxious Weed Management Plan for the Lewistown District

Bureau of Land Management, Lewistown District, 2001, Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument: Guidelines for Integrated Weed Management

Bureau of Land Management, Lewistown District Office, February 1993, Upper Missouri National Wild and Scenic River Management Plan Update

Bureau of Land Management, Miles City District Office, December 1987, Missouri Breaks Wilderness Suitability Study/EIS final

Bureau of Land Management, Montana State Office, 1979, Missouri Breaks Grazing Environmental Impact Statement

Bureau of Land Management, Montana State Office, June 2001, Montana State Director's Guidance for managing the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument

Bureau of Land Management, Lewistown District, 1987, West HiLine Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement

Code of Federal Regulations 43, October 2003, 4100 –Grazing Administration

Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, May 1998 as revised and updated, Monitoring for Success

6.2 Glossary of Terms

Custodial grazing authorization is an authorization used for allotments or parts of grazing allotments that have limited public land resource values, are impractical to manage for public land objectives or other circumstances makes them low priority. These authorizations will generally be limited to a season and stocking level with a general terms and conditions to meet Standards for Rangeland health and Land Use plan objectives.

Riparian communities are defined as land directly influence by permanent water. It has visible vegetation or physical characteristics reflective of permanent water influence. Lake shores and stream banks are typical riparian areas. Excluded are such sites as ephemeral steams or washes that do not exhibit the presence of vegetation dependant upon free water in the soil. *Ref: BLM Montana State Office August 1997 Montana/Dakotas Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management*

Riparian community health is rated by indicators of the hydrologic, erosion and vegetation in the communities. A summary rating of the health of the riparian community is expressed as Proper Functioning condition, Functional at Risk or Non Functional. Reference: BLM Technical Reference 1737-9, 1993. These ratings are further defined as follows:

Proper Functioning Condition - Riparian areas are functioning properly when adequate vegetation, landform, or large woody debris is present to dissipate stream energy associated with high waterfowls, thereby reducing erosion and improving water quality; filter sediment, capture bed load, and aid floodplain development; improve flood-water retention and ground-water recharge; develop root masses that stabilize stream banks against cutting action; develop diverse ponding and channel characteristics to provide the habitat and the water depth, duration, and temperature necessary for fish production, waterfowl breeding, and other uses; and support greater biodiversity.

Functional at Risk - Riparian areas that are currently performing their riparian function but with are susceptible to degradation due to an existing soil, water, or vegetation attribute are considered functioning at risk

Nonfunctional Riparian areas are considered nonfunctioning when they are clearly not providing adequate vegetation, landform, or large woody debris to perform the function listed under Properly Functioning Condition. The absence of certain physical attributes such as a floodplain where one should be are indicator of nonfunctioning condition.

Rangeland Health - The degree to which the integrity of the soil and ecological processes of rangeland ecosystems are sustained. National Research Council, 1994, Rangeland Health – New Methods to Classify, Inventory, and Monitor Rangelands.

Special Status Species (BLM Manual 6840)

Proposed species- species that have been officially proposed for listing at threatened or endangered by the Secretary of the Interior. A proposed rule has been published in the Federal Register.

Listed species- species officially listed as threatened or endangered by the Secretary of the Interior under the provisions of the ESA. A final rule for the listing has been published in the Federal Register.

- endangered species- and species which are in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range.
- threatened species- any species which is likely to become an endangered species within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range.

Candidate species- species designated as candidates for listing as threatened or endangered by the FWS and/or NMFS. A list has been published in the Federal Register.

State listed species- species listed by the State in a category implying but not limited to potential endangerment or extinction. Listing is either by legislation or regulation.

Sensitive species- species designated by a State Director, usually in cooperation with the State agency responsible for managing the species and State Natural heritage programs, as sensitive. They are those species that: (1) could become endangered in or extirpated from a State, or within a significant portion of its distribution/ (2) are under status review by the FWS and/or NMFS; (3) are undergoing significant current or predicted downward trends in habitat capability that would reduce a species' existing distribution; (4) are undergoing significant current or predicted downward trend in population or density such that federal listed, proposed, candidate, or State listed status may become necessary; (5) typically have small and widely dispersed populations; (6) inhabit ecological refugia or other specialized or unique habitats; or (7) are State listed but which may be better conserved through application of BLM sensitive species status.

Standards for Rangeland Health

Standards for Rangeland Health were established in 1995 by regulations with specific indicators established for the region by the Central Montana Resource Advisory Council. These Standards were approved in August 1997. Standards for Rangeland Health are assessments of the functionality of the ecosystem and ecological processes on the land. The focus of Standards for Rangeland Health is the land resource and not the uses of the land. The Standards are as follows:

Standard 1 - "Upland Communities are proper functioning condition"

Upland health uses indicators in vegetation and soils to determine if this standard is being met.

Standard 2 - "Riparian communities are in Proper functioning condition"

Riparian community health is rated based on indicators in vegetation, erosion and hydrology to determine if this standard is being met.

Standard 3 - "Water quality meets Montana State standards"

Standard 4 - "Air quality meets Montana State standards"

Standard 5 - "Biodiversity and Threatened and Endangered Species,

This standard considers indicators of diversity (species richness, variety of successional stages, range of natural distribution) and habitat.

6.3 List of Acronyms Used in this EA

ACEC	Area of Critical Environmental Concern
AMP	Allotment Management Plan
ATV	All Terrain Vehicle
BLM	Bureau of Land Management
DR	Decision Record
EA	Environmental Assessment
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
FONSI	Finding of No Significant Impact
FWS	Fish and Wildlife Service
IWM	Integrated Weed Management
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NMFS	National Marine Fishery Service
RMP	Resource Management Plan
SSS	Special Status Species
UMRBNM	Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument
VRM	Visual Resource Management
WSA	Wilderness Study Area

APPENDICES

Appendix A - Standards Summary Determinations and Proposed Action

Appendix B - Special Status Species

Appendix C – Standards for Rangeland Health & Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management

Appendix D – Plan Conformance-Applicable Parts

West HiLine Land

Interim Guidance for the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument

Appendix A – Standards Summary Determinations and Proposed Action

Alternative A - No Action

Livestock grazing on public land would be phased out over the next 10 years as existing grazing permits expire.

Alternative B - Proposed Action

This alternative would implement only those actions necessary to meet the Standards for Rangeland Health where:

1. Standards are not being met now as a function of livestock grazing; and/or
2. There needs to be action to avoid not meeting standards in the near future, as a function of livestock grazing. In some instances this would involve only restricting grazing treatments without installing or removing any rangeland improvements.

Common to all grazing authorizations in the proposed alternative, a stipulation would be added as a term and condition of the grazing permit or lease stating that Standards for Rangeland Health will be met, as established in 43 CFR 4180 and refined in the Montana/Dakotas Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management (1997). This can include, but is not limited to, terms and conditions for stocking, seasons of use, duration of grazing period, placement of salt or other supplements. In addition, the Standards of Rangeland Health would be assessed again in 10 years upon expiration of the grazing permit.

Allotment Categories

“T” = Priority allotments having either notable resource values and/or needing **improvement**.

“M” = Allotments having normal public land resource values and will be managed to **maintain** current conditions.

“C” = Allotments having limited resource values or opportunities and are generally small and isolated tracts. They are authorized with a **custodial** authorization.

Allotment Name, Number, Category, BLM Acres & AUMs	Are Healthy Rangeland Standards Being Met?			Alternative A (No Action)	Alternative B (Proposed Action)	Monitoring Activity
	Upland	Riparian	Bio- diversity			
Allotments Not Meeting the Standards for Rangeland Health (LIVESTOCK RELATED)						
6168 Al's Creek "I" 3385 acres 366 AUMs	No	No	Yes	Grazing permit would not be renewed.	The allotment was assessed in 1998 and found not to be meeting the Standards of Rangeland Health. Trend is still down and no improvement in resource conditions have been noted during the interim period. To achieve an improvement in resource conditions, the stocking rate would be reduced and the date livestock are turned out in 2005 would be delayed until after the growing season. A grazing strategy would be implemented to provide rest during the growing season.	Actual livestock use reports collected at the end of the grazing season. Upland trend plots would be repeated at the end of every grazing cycle. Riparian community monitoring would be repeated every two years along Cow Creek. Standards of Rangeland Health assessments would be repeated in 2005 to measure trend in resource conditions.
	<u>Uplands</u> – loss and decline in vigor of desirable forage plants, erosion and excessive amount of bare ground. <u>Riparian</u> – Cow Creek and Al's Creek heavily impacted by livestock.					

6182 Hay Coulee "I" 12956 acres 1491 AUMs	No	No	No	Grazing permit and preference cancelled by decision effective July 2004. Public land is unallocated (not currently permitted for livestock grazing).	The Hay Coulee Allotment would be set aside as a “grass reserve”/ “resource reserve” allotment. Grazing would be authorized on an annual basis through issuance of a nonrenewable permit. Areas of the allotment with resource problems would be rested from one to several growing seasons to allow for plant recovery and improve rangeland health. Three miles of permanent electric fence would be constructed along the west side of the Hay Coulee pasture to prevent livestock from drifting onto public land. The Hay Coulee Allotment boundary would be adjusted to reduce fence repairs and drift problems.	Actual livestock use reports collected at the end of the grazing season. Upland trend plots would be repeated at the end of every grazing cycle. Riparian community monitoring would be repeated every two years along Cow Creek. Browse utilization transects would be completed in crucial big game range. Standards of Rangeland Health assessments would be repeated in three years to measure trend in resource conditions.
	<u>Uplands</u> – low successional level, health and vigor of key forage plants are declining, bare ground excessive. <u>Riparian</u> – Cow Creek woody plant communities heavily impacted by livestock. <u>Habitat Diversity</u> – low diversity within sagebrush communities, livestock use has impacted availability of winter forage, conifer encroachment into sagebrush communities.					
6184 Greens Bench “M” 12038 acres 1191 AUMs	No	Yes	Yes	Grazing permit would not be renewed.	Adjust the grazing rotation to improve upland health and provide plant rest during the growing season in the Gumbo Field. BLM will provide the operator with an annual operating plan specifying the stocking rate, season of use and pasture rotation.	Actual livestock use reports collected at the end of the grazing season. Upland trend plots would be repeated at the end of every grazing cycle.
	<u>Uplands</u> – health and vigor of key forage plants declining in the Gumbo Field.					
6221 Deadman Rapids “I” 1646 acres 110 AUMs	No	N/A	No	Grazing permit would not be renewed.	Develop off-site water to draw livestock away from the river and off adjacent river terraces. Establish a separate grazing area in the upriver pasture separating the river terraces away from upland areas. Continue to monitor the stocking rate and season livestock use the allotment.	Actual livestock use reports collected at the end of the grazing season. Upland trend plots would be repeated at the end of every grazing cycle. Prairie Dog towns would be monitored on a three year cycle for expansion and presence of associated species.
	<u>Uplands</u> – decline of desirable grass plants, increase in density of sagebrush, loss of understory forbs and grasses, increaser species dominated upland areas. <u>Habitat Diversity</u> – reduced structural diversity, reduced vigor and diversity of native plant communities.					

Allotments Not Meeting the Standards for Rangeland Health (NOT LIVESTOCK RELATED)						
855 T26N R12E Section 1&12 “C” 50 acres 10 acres are fenced to exclude livestock in the Little Sandy Recreation Area.	No	No	No	Public land tracts are unallocated (not permitted for livestock grazing).	The isolated 40 acres outside of the Little Sandy Recreation Site would be available for grazing to a qualified applicant. Fence around the Little Sandy Recreation Area would be maintained to exclude livestock grazing. Public land acres within the enclosure would remain unallocated. Noxious weeds would continue to be treated by chemical and mechanical means. Leafy spurge, Canada thistle, and Russian knapweed are targeted for containment. Russian olive and perennial pepperweed are targeted for eradication.	Standards of Rangeland Health would be assessed again in 10 years.
	<u>Uplands</u> – the area outside the enclosure rated in a low successional level and has a high percentage of bare ground. Area is impacted by livestock grazing. <u>Riparian/Biodiversity</u> – area within the enclosure is infested with a high density of noxious weeds impacting riparian plant communities and wildlife habitat.					
864 T26N R12E Section 4 “C” 29 acres	No	No	No	Public land tract is unallocated (not permitted for livestock grazing).	Public land tract would be available for grazing to a qualified applicant. Management of leafy spurge would continue through biological controls. Russian knapweed and Canada Thistle also occur here.	Standards of Rangeland Health would be assessed again in 10 years.
	The Standards of Rangeland Health are not being met because of the presence of noxious weeds and nonnative species.					
868 T26N R12E Section 3 “C” 15 acre Island	No	No	No	Public land tract is unallocated (not permitted for livestock grazing).	Public land tract is an island and would remain unallocated (not available for grazing by livestock). Weed control would target containment of leafy spurge and Russian knapweed.	Standards of Rangeland Health would be assessed again in 10 years.
	The Standards of Rangeland Health are not being met because of the presence of noxious weeds.					
912 T26N R12E Section 11&12 “C” 30 acre Island	N/A	No	No	Public land tract is unallocated (not permitted for livestock grazing).	Public land tract is an island and would remain unallocated (not available for grazing by livestock). Island is infested with leafy spurge, Russian knapweed, Russian olive, and Canada thistle. Weed treatment is currently limited to biological control.	Standards of Rangeland Health would be assessed again in 10 years.
	The Standards of Rangeland Health are not being met because of the presence of noxious weeds.					

6218 Sneath Common “T” 5800 acres 344 AUMs	Yes	Yes	No	Grazing permit would not be renewed.	Actions to manage prairie dogs as well as renew the grazing lease are being analyzed in a separate Environmental Document expected to be completed by 9/30/05. Noxious weeds would continue to be treated by chemical, biological and mechanical means. Leafy spurge, Canada thistle, and Russian knapweed are targeted for containment. Russian olive, spotted knapweed, and perennial pepperweed are targeted for eradication.	Actual livestock use reports collected at the end of the grazing season. Upland trend plots would be repeated at the end of every grazing cycle. Riparian community monitoring would be repeated every three years along the Missouri River. Prairie Dog towns would be monitored on a three year cycle for expansion and presence of associated species.
	<u>Habitat Diversity</u> – prairie dog expansion affecting upland health and diversity of wildlife habitat along the Missouri River.					
Unallocated Allotments Meeting the Standards for Rangeland Health						
866 T27N R12E Section 26 “C” 40 acres	Yes	N/A	Yes	Public land tracts are unallocated (not permitted for livestock grazing).	Public land tracts would be available for grazing to a qualified applicant.	Standards of Rangeland Health would be assessed again in 10 years.
867 T26N R12E Section 5 “C” 40 acres						
869 T27N R11E Section 32 “C” 80 acres						
871 Anchors’s Island “C” 40 acres						
873 T26N R10E Section 12 “C” 80 acres						
883 T23N R18E Section 4 “C” 40 Acres						
916 T27N R12E Section 10 “C” 40 acres						
958 T25N R16E Section 11 “C” 40 acres						

Allotments Meeting Standards for Rangeland Health (NO MANAGEMENT CHANGES PROPOSED)						
820 Sanford Pasture "C" 701 acres, 72 AUMs	Yes	N/A	Yes	Grazing permit would not be renewed.	Meets the Standards of Rangeland Health; No Management Changes Proposed; Renew the grazing permit for a term of 10 years.	Standards of Rangeland Health would be assessed again in 10 years.
6003 Six Mile Coulee "C" 158 acres, 27 AUMs	Yes	N/A	Yes			
6154 Birdtail Butte "C" 561 acres, 134 AUMs	Yes	Yes	Yes			
6159 Myrtle Butte "C" 1177 acres, 256 AUMs	Yes	N/A	Yes			
6162 Henderson Place "C" 80 acres, 13 AUMs	Yes	N/A	Yes			
6174 Bench Mark "C" 240 acres, 44 AUMs	Yes	N/A	Yes			
6181 Bullwhacker "I" 40535 acres 4561 AUMs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Grazing permit would not be renewed.	<p>Meets the Standards of Rangeland Health; No Management Changes Proposed; Renew the grazing permit for a term of 10 years.</p> <p>The Bullwhacker Allotment boundary would be adjusted to reduce fence repairs.</p>	<p>Actual livestock use reports collected at the end of the grazing season.</p> <p>Upland trend plots would be repeated at the end of every grazing cycle.</p> <p>Riparian community monitoring would be repeated every two years.</p> <p>Browse utilization transects would be completed in crucial big game range.</p>
6183 Birch Creek "M" 3315 acres, 281 AUMs	Yes	N/A	Yes	Grazing permit would not be renewed.	Meets the Standards of Rangeland Health; No Management Changes Proposed; Renew the grazing permit for a term of 10 years.	<p>Actual livestock use reports collected at the end of the grazing season.</p> <p>Upland trend plots would be repeated at the end of every grazing cycle.</p>
6185 Scattered Tracts "C" 577 acres, 92 AUMs	Yes	N/A	Yes	Grazing permit would not be renewed.	Meets the Standards of Rangeland Health; No Management Changes Proposed; Renew the grazing permit for a term of 10 years.	Standards of Rangeland Health would be assessed again in 10 years.
6187 Fork of Black Coulee "C" 1013 acres, 135 AUMs	Yes	N/A	Yes	Grazing permit would not be renewed.	Meets the Standards of Rangeland Health; No Management Changes Proposed; Renew the grazing permit for a term of 10 years.	Standards of Rangeland Health would be assessed again in 10 years.
6190 Oliver "C" 241 acres, 36 AUMs	Yes	N/A	Yes			
6200 Chip Creek "M" 1160 acres, 165 AUMs	Yes	N/A	Yes			

6202 Cummings Bench “M” 2115 acres, 129 AUMs	Yes	N/A	Yes	Grazing permit would not be renewed.	Renew the grazing permit for a term of 10 years for the Cummings Bench allotment	Actual livestock use reports collected at the end of the grazing season. Upland trend plots would be repeated at the end of every grazing cycle.
6209 Barnard Ridge "I" 3197 acres 294 AUMs	Yes	N/A	Yes	Grazing permit would not be renewed.	Meets the Standards of Rangeland Health; No Management Changes Proposed; Renew the grazing permit for a term of 10 years.	Actual livestock use reports collected at the end of the grazing season. Upland trend plots would be repeated at the end of every grazing cycle.
6220 8 Mile Bench “C” 818 acres, 89 AUMs	Yes	N/A	Yes	Grazing permit would not be renewed.	Meets the Standards of Rangeland Health; No Management Changes Proposed; Renew the grazing permit for a term of 10 years.	Standards of Rangeland Health would be assessed again in 10 years.
6223 Husar Home Place “C” 60 acres, 7 AUMs	Yes	N/A	Yes			
6273 Bear Point “C” 279 acres, 28 AUMs	Yes	N/A	Yes			
6277 Volcano “C” 168 acres, 35 AUMs 6278 Flat Rock “C” 164 acres, 27 AUMs	Yes	N/A	Yes	Grazing permit would not be renewed.	Meets the Standards of Rangeland Health; No Management Changes Proposed; Renew the grazing permit for a term of 10 years.	Standards of Rangeland Health would be assessed again in 10 years.
6411 Preference Lands “C” 248 acres, 38 AUMs	Yes	N/A	Yes	Grazing permit would not be renewed.	Meets the Standards of Rangeland Health; No Management Changes Proposed; Renew the grazing permit for a term of 10 years.	Standards of Rangeland Health would be assessed again in 10 years.
6412 Buckskin “C” 840 acres, 110 AUMs	Yes	N/A	Yes			
6414 Triangle PU “M” 282 acres, 47 AUMs	Yes	N/A	Yes			
6421 Sevcik Place “C” 80 acres, 23 AUMs	Yes	N/A	Yes			
6428 Osterman “C” 200 acres, 42 AUMs	Yes	N/A	Yes			
6430 Braun “C” 96 acres, 12 AUMs	Yes	N/A	Yes			
6456 Reservation “C” 244 acres, 34 AUMs	Yes	N/A	Yes			
6457 Edwards Lease “C” 300 acres, 43 AUMs	Yes	N/A	Yes			
6491 Pine Tree “C” 80 acres, 18 AUMs	Yes	N/A	Yes			
6554 T28N R17E Sec 5 N½SW “C” 80 acres, 19 AUMs	Yes	N/A	Yes			

Allotments Meeting the Standards for Rangeland Health (MANAGEMENT CHANGES PROPOSED)						
940 Eskay "C" 40 acres, 8 AUMs	Yes	N/A	Yes	Grazing lease and permit would not be renewed.	Renew the custodial grazing lease for the Eskay and North Rapp Allotments for a term of 10 years.	Actual livestock use reports collected at the end of the grazing season. Upland trend plots would be repeated at the end of every grazing cycle. Riparian community monitoring would be repeated every three years along Pigtail Coulee.
6198 Chase Hill Common "M" 1218 acres, 112 AUMs	Yes	N/A	Yes		Renew the grazing lease for a term of 10 years for the Chase Hill Common, Greens Coulee, Dogtown and Pigtail allotments. The allotments would be combined and managed as one grazing unit. Develop a management plan setting the stocking rate, pasture rotations and season of use.	
6199 Greens Coulee "M" 1525 acres, 109 AUMs	Yes	N/A	Yes			
6415 Dogtown "I" 1105 acres, 91 AUMs	Yes	N/A	Yes			
6435 North Rapp "C" 287 acres, 7 AUMs	Yes	N/A	Yes		Leafy spurge on Birch Creek in the Greens Coulee allotment would be targeted for eradication.	
6416 Pigtail Coulee "I" 1239 acres, 132 AUMs	Yes	Yes	Yes			
944 Lutge Place "I" 2265 acres 90 AUMs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Grazing permit and lease would not be renewed	Renew the grazing permit and lease for a term of 10 years. The Lutge Place and Golf Bench allotments would be combined into one management unit. The Lutge Place would be grazed during the spring and fall. The Golf Bench allotment, containing 5 pastures, would be grazed during the summer.	Actual livestock use reports collected at the end of the grazing season. Riparian community monitoring would be repeated every three years along the Missouri River.
6203 Golf Bench "I" 3319 acres 230 AUMs	Yes	N/A	Yes		<p>Install a temporary electric fence around existing crested wheatgrass seedings in the Golf Bench allotment to improve use by livestock in the spring and delay grazing on native rangeland.</p> <p>Leafy spurge and Russian knapweed are targeted for containment along the Missouri River within the Lutge Place allotment.</p> <p>Install a short fence in the Northeast pasture of the Golf Bench allotment to prevent livestock from drifting into the Black Coulee Common allotment.</p>	

6153 Gap Creek "C" 1037 acres 116 AUMs	Yes	N/A	Yes	Grazing permit would not be renewed.	The current yearlong grazing period for the Gap Creek Allotment would be shortened to 5/1 to 12/31. Leafy spurge infestations adjacent Cow Creek would continue to be treated with chemical and biological control agents.	Standards of Rangeland Health would be assessed again in 10 years.
6157 Reeder Field "C" 381 acres, 46 AUMs 6165 TU Bench "M" 1874 acres, 330 AUMs	Yes	N/A	Yes	Grazing permit would not be renewed.	Renew the grazing permit for a term of 10 years continuing with the terms and conditions issued in the grazing decision of March 22, 1999.	Actual livestock use reports collected at the end of the grazing season. Upland trend plots would be repeated at the end of every grazing cycle.
6160 North and McGuire "C" 905 acres, 201 AUMs 6172 Timber Ridge "I" 11599 acres, 1662 AUMs 6269 North Timber Ridge "I" 1125 acres, 145 AUMs	Yes	N/A	Yes	Grazing permit would not be renewed.	Renew the custodial grazing permit for the North & McGuire Allotment for a term of 10 years. The Timber Ridge and North Timber Ridge allotments would be combined and managed as one grazing unit. Develop a management plan establishing the stocking rate, pasture rotations and season of use. The Timber Ridge Allotment boundary would be adjusted to reduce drift problems across Hay Coulee from the Spencer Ridge Allotment.	Actual livestock use reports collected at the end of the grazing season. Upland trend plots would be repeated at the end of every grazing cycle.
6163 Sawtooth Mtn "C" 200 acres, 52 AUMs 6164 Three Mile Ridge "M" 10281 acres, 1460 AUMs 6166 Pioneer "M" 600 acres, 60 AUMs 6180 Bullseye "C" 40 acres, 5 AUMs 6281 TU West "C" 80 acres, 20 AUMs	Yes	N/A	Yes	Grazing permit would not be renewed.	Renew the custodial grazing permit for the Sawtooth Mtn, Bullseye and TU West Allotments for a term of 10 years. The Three Mile Ridge and Pioneer allotments would be combined and managed as one grazing unit. The existing allotment management plan would be modified establishing the stocking rate, pasture rotations and season of use.	Actual livestock use reports collected at the end of the grazing season. Upland trend plots would be repeated at the end of every grazing cycle.

6161 Reid Place "C" 240 acres, 34 AUMs	Yes	N/A	Yes	Grazing permit would not be renewed.	Permitted and authorized use reduced from 80 AUMs to 34 AUMs (the available forage on public land). Renew the grazing permit for a term of 10 years for the Reid Place allotment.	Standards of Rangeland Health would be assessed again in 10 years.
6167 Tin cup "M" 559 acres, 64 AUMs 6169 Chimney Butte "I" 7112 acres, 716 AUMs 6171 Little Suction "M" 1405 acres, 134 AUMs	Yes	N/A	Yes	Grazing permit would not be renewed.	The current yearlong grazing period for the Tin Cup Allotment would be shortened to 5/1 to 11/1. Renew the grazing permit for a term of 10 years for the Chimney Butte and Little Suction allotments.	Actual livestock use reports collected at the end of the grazing season. Upland trend plots would be repeated at the end of every grazing cycle.
6173 Sand Creek "I" 5349 acres 875 AUMs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Grazing lease and permit would not be renewed.	Renew the grazing permit for the Sand Creek Allotment for a term of 10 years. Include terms and conditions that require implementation of a grazing plan and pasture rotation.	Actual livestock use reports collected at the end of the grazing season. Upland trend plots would be repeated at the end of every grazing cycle. Riparian community monitoring would be repeated every three years.
6175 Nielson Homestead "C" 632 acres, 97 AUMs 6178 Boggess Place "C" 467 acres, 73 AUMs	Yes	N/A	Yes	Grazing permit would not be renewed.	Class of livestock would be changed from cattle to horses. The current yearlong grazing period for both allotments would be shortened to a summer grazing period.	Standards of Rangeland Health would be assessed again in 10 years.
6189 North Ranch "C" 420 acres, 69 AUMs	Yes	N/A	Yes	Grazing permit would not be renewed.	The North Ranch Allotment would be combined with the Upper Black Coulee Allotment (6206) and managed as one grazing unit. Develop a management plan setting the stocking rate, pasture rotations and season of use.	Actual livestock use reports collected at the end of the grazing season.
6192 North Fork of Lion Coulee "I" 3930 acres, 592 AUMs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Grazing permit would not be renewed.	Include terms and conditions in the grazing permit that require implementation of a grazing method and pasture rotation.	Actual livestock use reports collected at the end of the grazing season. Upland trend plots would be repeated at the end of every grazing cycle. Standards of Rangeland Health assessments would be repeated in five years to measure trend in resource conditions.

6193 Lions Coulee "I" 3351 acres, 410 AUMs 6208 Lost Ridge "M" 6253 acres, 47 AUMs 6254 Lost Bird "C" 40 acres, 6 AUMs	Yes Yes	Yes N/A	Yes Yes	Grazing permit would not be renewed. Grazing permit would not be renewed.	Renew the grazing permit for the Lions Coulee, Lost Ridge and Lost Bird Allotments for a term of 10 years. Noxious weeds would continue to be treated by chemical and biological means. Leafy spurge, Canada thistle and Russian knapweed are targeted for containment. Perennial pepperweed is targeted for eradication on the Lost Ridge allotment.	Actual livestock use reports collected at the end of the grazing season. Upland trend plots would be repeated at the end of every grazing cycle. Riparian community monitoring would be repeated every three years along the Missouri River.
6194 Spencer Ridge "M" 7250 acres, 587 AUMs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Grazing permit would not be renewed.	Renew grazing permit for a term of 10 years. The Spencer Ridge Allotment boundary would be adjusted to reduce drift problems across Hay Coulee from the Timber Ridge Allotment.	Actual livestock use reports collected at the end of the grazing season. Upland trend plots would be repeated at the end of every grazing cycle. Riparian community monitoring would be repeated every three years along Cow Creek.
6201 Halley "I" 3806 acres, 441 AUMs	Yes	N/A	Yes	Grazing permit would not be renewed.	Include terms and conditions in the grazing permit that require implementation of a grazing method and pasture rotation.	Actual livestock use reports collected at the end of the grazing season. Upland trend plots would be repeated at the end of every grazing cycle.
6204 Black Coulee Common "M" 4642 acres, 141 AUMs	Yes	N/A	Yes	Grazing permit would not be renewed.	The current yearlong grazing period would be shortened to 5/15 to 11/1. Install a short fence in the Northeast pasture of the Golf Bench allotment to prevent livestock from drifting into the Black Coulee Common allotment.	Actual livestock use reports collected at the end of the grazing season. Upland trend plots would be repeated at the end of every grazing cycle.
6205 Moravec Individual "C" 440 acres, 12 AUMs 6206 Upper Black Coulee "M" 1036 acres, 104 AUMs 6224 Upper Dauphine Rapids "C" 1663 acres, 20 AUMs	Yes	N/A	Yes	Grazing permit would not be renewed.	The Upper Black Coulee Allotment would be combined with the North Ranch Allotment (6189) and managed as one grazing unit. Develop a management plan setting the stocking rate, pasture rotations and season of use.	Actual livestock use reports collected at the end of the grazing season. Upland trend plots would be repeated at the end of every grazing cycle.
6210 Maxwell "C" 100 acres, 10 AUMs	Yes	N/A	Yes	Grazing permit would not be renewed.	The current yearlong grazing period would be shortened to 4/15 to 10/31.	Standards of Rangeland Health would be assessed again in 10 years.

6211 Black Butte "I" 8305 acres, 739 AUMs	Yes	N/A	Yes	Grazing permit would not be renewed.	Renew the grazing permit for a term of 10 years in accordance with the grazing decision of February 20, 1997.	Actual livestock use reports collected at the end of the grazing season. Upland trend plots would be repeated at the end of every grazing cycle.
6212 Ervin Ridgetop "I" 9973 acres, 663 AUMs	Yes	N/A	Yes		Renew the grazing permit for the Ervin Ridge, Greasewood Bottom, Williamson Bottom, Sturgeon Island and West Gist Allotments for a term of 10 years in accordance with the grazing decision of February 20, 1997.	Actual livestock use reports collected at the end of the grazing season. Upland trend plots would be repeated at the end of every grazing cycle. Riparian community monitoring would be repeated every three years along the Missouri River.
6282 Greasewood Bottom "I" 517 acres, 100 AUMs	Yes	Yes	Yes		Noxious weeds would continue to be treated by chemical and biological means. Leafy spurge, Canada thistle, and Russian knapweed are targeted for containment on Greasewood Bottom, Williamson Bottom, Sturgeon Island, and West Gist allotments. Perennial pepperweed is targeted for eradication on the West Gist allotment.	
6283 Williamson Bottom "I" 479 acres, 32 AUMs	Yes	Yes	Yes			
6284 Sturgeon Island "I" 558 acres, 0 AUMs	Yes	Yes	Yes			
6285 West Gist "I" 312 acres, 0 AUMs	Yes	Yes	Yes			
6207 Ragland Ridge "M" 1085 acres, 25 AUMs	Yes	N/A	Yes	Grazing permit would not be renewed.	The current yearlong grazing period for the Ragland Ridge Allotment would be shortened to 6/15 to 10/15.	Standards of Rangeland Health would be assessed again in 10 years.
6225 Dauphine Rapids "C" 214 acres, 12 AUMs					Noxious weeds would continue to be treated by chemical and mechanical means along the Missouri River. Leafy spurge, Canada thistle, and Russian knapweed are targeted for containment. Spotted knapweed and perennial pepperweed are targeted for eradication.	
6214 Little Bullwhacker "I" 22278 acres 1361 AUMs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Grazing permit would not be renewed.	Renew the grazing permit on the Little Bullwhacker Allotment for a term of 10 years. Noxious weeds would continue to be treated by chemical and biological means. Leafy spurge, Canada thistle, and Russian knapweed are targeted for containment. Perennial pepperweed is targeted for eradication.	Actual livestock use reports collected at the end of the grazing season. Upland trend plots would be repeated at the end of every grazing cycle. Riparian community monitoring would be repeated every three years along the Missouri River.

6215 Dark Butte "I" 4404 acres, 362 AUMs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Grazing permit would not be renewed.	<p>Renew the grazing permit on the Dark Butte Allotment for a term of 10 years.</p> <p>Manage grazing periods to reduce livestock and recreation conflicts in the west pasture (Dark Butte campground).</p> <p>Noxious weeds would continue to be treated by chemical, biological, and mechanical means. Leafy spurge, Canada thistle, and Russian knapweed are targeted for containment. Russian olive, spotted knapweed, and perennial pepperweed are targeted for eradication.</p>	<p>Actual livestock use reports collected at the end of the grazing season.</p> <p>Upland trend plots would be repeated at the end of every grazing cycle.</p> <p>Riparian community monitoring would be repeated every three years along the Missouri River.</p> <p>Prairie Dog towns would be monitored on a three year cycle for expansion and presence of associated species.</p>
6216 Pablo Rapids "I" 2644 acres, 105 AUMs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Grazing permit would not be renewed.	<p>Continue maintaining the fence around riparian plant communities and tree planting area.</p> <p>Continue to adjust the stocking rate to balance authorized use with the allotment carrying capacity.</p> <p>No supplements or salt would be allowed within ½ mile of the river.</p> <p>Noxious weeds would continue to be treated by chemical, biological and mechanical means. Leafy spurge, Canada thistle, and Russian knapweed are targeted for containment. Russian olive, spotted knapweed, black henbane, and perennial pepperweed are targeted for eradication.</p>	<p>Actual livestock use reports collected at the end of the grazing season.</p> <p>Upland trend plots would be repeated at the end of every grazing cycle.</p> <p>Riparian community monitoring would be repeated every three years along the Missouri River.</p>
6222 Gallatin Rapids "I" 5404 acres, 287 AUMs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Grazing permit would not be renewed.	<p>Renew the grazing permit for the Gallatin Rapids Allotment for a term of 10 years.</p> <p>Noxious weeds would continue to be treated by chemical, biological and mechanical means. Leafy spurge, Canada thistle, and Russian knapweed are targeted for containment. Spotted knapweed and perennial pepperweed are targeted for eradication.</p>	<p>Actual livestock use reports collected at the end of the grazing season.</p> <p>Upland trend plots would be repeated at the end of every grazing cycle.</p> <p>Riparian community monitoring would be repeated every three years along the Missouri River.</p> <p>Prairie Dog towns would be monitored on a three year cycle for expansion and presence of associated species.</p>

6219 Four Mile Hill "C" 40 acres, 14 AUMs	Yes	N/A	Yes	Grazing permit would not be renewed.	Permitted and authorized use reduced to 4 AUMs (the available forage on public land). The season of use will be changed to 7/1-10/15.	Standards of Rangeland Health would be assessed again in 10 years.
6275 Stone Place "M" 454 acres, 75 AUMs	Yes	N/A	Yes	Grazing permit would not be renewed.	The class of livestock would be changed from cattle to horses and cattle. The current grazing period would be shortened to a summer grazing period.	Standards of Rangeland Health would be assessed again in 10 years.
6276 West Stone "M" 1415 acres, 250 AUMs	Yes	N/A	Yes	Grazing permit would not be renewed.	Meets the Standards of Rangeland Health; Season of use would be changed to 5/15-11/15.	Actual livestock use reports collected at the end of the grazing season. Upland trend plots would be repeated at the end of every grazing cycle.
6286 Cecrle place "C" 40 acres, 11 AUMs	Yes	N/A	Yes	Grazing permit would not be renewed.	The current yearlong grazing period would be shortened to 9/1 to 12/1.	Standards of Rangeland Health would be assessed again in 10 years.
6420 Clinard Coulee "C" 628 acres, 76 AUMs	Yes	N/A	Yes	Grazing permit would not be renewed.	Renew the grazing lease for a term of 10 years.	Standards of Rangeland Health would be assessed again in 10 years.
6424 Blazek "C" 336 acres, 90 AUMs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Grazing permit would not be renewed.	Current 5/15 to 11/15 custodial authorization would continue. Noxious weeds would continue to be treated by chemical, biological and mechanical means. Leafy spurge, Canada thistle, and Russian knapweed are targeted for containment. Russian olive and perennial pepperweed are targeted for eradication.	Standards of Rangeland Health would be assessed again in 10 years. Riparian community monitoring would be repeated every three years along the Missouri River.
6425 Piedras "C" 1002 acres, 54 AUMs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Grazing permit would not be renewed.	The current yearlong grazing period would be shortened to 8/1 to 11/1. Noxious weeds would continue to be treated by chemical, biological and mechanical means. Leafy spurge, Canada thistle, and Russian knapweed are targeted for containment. Russian olive, spotted knapweed, and perennial pepperweed are targeted for eradication.	Standards of Rangeland Health would be assessed again in 10 years. Riparian community monitoring would be repeated every three years along the Missouri River.
6426 White Rocks "C" 186 acres, 42 AUMs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Grazing permit would not be renewed.	The current yearlong grazing period would be shortened to 6/1 to 10/31.	Standards of Rangeland Health would be assessed again in 10 years. Riparian community monitoring would be repeated every three years along the Missouri River.

6429 Puma "C" 156 acres, 53 AUMs	Yes	N/A	Yes	Grazing permit would not be renewed.	The current yearlong grazing period would be shortened to a spring, summer and fall grazing period.	Standards of Rangeland Health would be assessed again in 10 years.
6458 Bearpaw "C" 25 acres, 4 AUMs	Yes	N/A	Yes	Grazing permit would not be renewed.	The current yearlong grazing period would be shortened to 6/15-12/1.	Standards of Rangeland Health would be assessed again in 10 years.
6476 Chauvet "C" 120 acres, 22 AUMs	Yes	N/A	Yes	Grazing permit would not be renewed.	The current yearlong grazing period would be shortened to 4/25 to 10/15.	Standards of Rangeland Health would be assessed again in 10 years.
6481 Jurenka "C" 130 acres, 7 AUMs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Grazing permit would not be renewed.	<p>The current yearlong grazing period would be shortened to 7/1 to 9/30.</p> <p>Noxious weeds would continue to be treated by chemical, biological and mechanical means. Leafy spurge, Canada thistle, and Russian knapweed are targeted for containment. Russian olive and perennial pepperweed are targeted for eradication.</p>	<p>Standards of Rangeland Health would be assessed again in 10 years.</p> <p>Riparian community monitoring would be repeated every three years along the Missouri River.</p>

**SPECIAL STATUS SPECIES AFFECTS DETERMINATIONS
SUMMARY TABLES**

Federally Listed Threatened and Endangered Species and Species Proposed for Listing

Species	Status	In Range (yes/no)	Habitat Present (yes/no)	Affects Determination (brief rationale)
Bald Eagle	T	Y	Y	Habitat present is primarily foraging during fall/spring migration and winter. Perching sites are widespread and not fixed in any known locations. There are two known nesting sites. The quantity and quality of this habitat will not be reduced appreciably and this action should have no affect on this species.
Least tern	E	Y	N	
Piping Plover	T	Y	N	
Whooping Crane	E	N	N	
Black-footed ferret	E	Y	Y	Habitat is present, but the quantity is not substantial.
Canada Lynx	T	N	N	
Gray wolf	E	N	N	
Grizzly Bear	T	N	N	
Bull Trout	T	N	N	
Pallid Sturgeon	E	Y	Y	Habitat is present in the Missouri River. The quantity and quality of this habitat will not be reduced and this action should have no affect on this species.
Spalding ' s Catchfly	P	N	N	
Ute Ladies-tresses	T	N	N	
Water Howellia	T	N	N	
Western Prairie Fringed Orchid	T	N	N	

SPECIAL STATUS SPECIES AFFECTS DETERMINATIONS SUMMARY TABLES

BLM (Montana and Dakotas) Designated Sensitive Species

BIRDS			
Species	In Range (yes/no) 1	Habitat present (yes/no) 2	Effects Determination (brief rationale) 3
Baird's sparrow	Y	N	
Black-backed woodpecker	N	N	
Black Tern	Y	N	
Boreal owl	N	N	
Burrowing owl	Y	Y	The proposed actions should not affect this species. Any future prairie dog control or surface disturbance activities on towns with owls or with potential owl habitat, will require full mitigation to protect owls, and could be denied based on presence of owls.
Common loon	N	N	
Dickcissel	N	N	
Ferruginous hawk	Y	Y	Small scale of habitat disturbance will not affect this species. Reduction in prairie dog numbers may have a negative impact.
Flammulated owl	N	N	
Great gray owl	N	N	
Greater Sage grouse	Y	Y	The quantity and quality of this habitat will not be reduced appreciably and this action should have minimal impacts on this species. See EA for impacts and mitigation.
Harlequin duck	N	N	
LeConte's sparrow	N	N	
Loggerhead shrike	Y	Y	Small scale of disturbance will not affect this species.

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Northern goshawk	Y	N	
Peregrine falcon	Y	Y	Habitat present is primarily foraging during migration with no occupied nesting habitat. The quantity and quality of this habitat will not be reduced appreciably and this action should have no affect on this species.
Pileated woodpecker	N	N	
Sage sparrow	N	N	
Swainson ' s hawk	Y	Y	Small scale of habitat disturbance will not affect this species.
Three-toed woodpecker	N	N	
Trumpeter swan	Y	N	
White-faced ibis	Y	N	
MAMMALS			
Species	In Range (yes/no) 1	Habitat present (yes/no) 2	Effects Determination (brief rationale) 3
Black-tailed prairie dog	Y	Y	The proposed actions should not affect this species. Expansion of PD towns and new towns which have become established since Jan., 2001, when the monument proclamation was signed, will be evaluated for conflicts with other resources and potential for expansion. The option to maintain expansion or reduce to baseline levels, when conflicts exist, will be determined through site specific NEPA analysis.
Fisher	N	N	
Meadow jumping mouse	N	N	
North American wolverine	N	N	
Northern Bog Lemming	N	N	
Preble ' s Shrew	N	N	
Pygmy rabbit	N	N	
Spotted bat	N	N	
Spotted skunk (western)	N	N	

Swift fox	N	N	
Townsend ' s big-eared bat	N	N	
White-tailed prairie dog	N	N	
REPTILES and AMPHIBIANS			
Species	In Range (yes/no) 1	Habitat present (yes/no) 2	Effects Determination (brief rationale) 3
Snapping turtle	Y	Y	Occurs in the Missouri river and its banks. Small scale of habitat disturbance will not affect this species.
Spiny softshell turtle	Y	Y	Occurs in the Missouri river and its banks. Small scale of habitat disturbance will not affect this species.
Canadian toad	N	N	
Coeur d ' Alene salamander	N	N	
Northern Leopard Frog	Y	Y	Occurs in the Missouri river and its banks. Small scale of habitat disturbance will not affect this species.
Spotted frog	N	N	
Tailed frog	N	N	
Wood frog	N	N	
FISH			
Species	In Range (yes/no) 1	Habitat present (yes/no) 2	Effects Determination (brief rationale) 3
Arctic grayling	N	N	
Blue sucker	Y	Y	Occurs in the Missouri river. Small scale of habitat disturbance will not affect this species.
Bull trout	N	N	
Northern redbelly X Finescale dace	Y	Y	Occurs in the tributaries of the Missouri river. Small scale of habitat disturbance will not affect this species.
Paddlefish	Y	Y	Occurs in the Missouri River. Small scale of habitat

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			disturbance will not affect this species.
Pearl dace	Y	Y	Occurs in the tributaries of the Missouri river. Small scale of habitat disturbance will not affect this species.
Shortnose gar	N	N	
Sicklefin chub	Y	Y	Occurs in the tributaries of the Missouri river. Small scale of habitat disturbance will not affect this species.
Sturgeon chub	Y	Y	Occurs in the tributaries of the Missouri river. Small scale of habitat disturbance will not affect this species.
Westslope cutthroat trout	N	N	
Yellowstone cutthroat trout	N	N	

- 1) If project is not within the range of the species no determination of habitat presence is needed.
- 2) If habitat is not present no effects determination is needed.
- 3) Detailed Effects Determination is provided in the narrative of Environmental Assessment

Appendix C - Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management (August 1997)

In keeping with 43 CFR 4180, Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for livestock grazing management were developed for the Lewistown District in 1997.

Standards for Rangeland Health

Standards for Rangeland Health were developed by the Lewistown District Resource Advisory Council. The standards are measurements of the biological and physical condition of a site. Healthy rangelands are based on conformance with the following standards.

Standard #1 - Uplands are in proper functioning condition.

Standard #2 - Riparian and wetland areas are in proper functioning condition.

Standard #3 - Water quality meets Montana state standards.

Standard #4 - Air quality meets Montana state standards.

Standard #5 - Habitats are provided to maintain healthy, productive and diverse populations of native plant and animal species, including special status (federally threatened, endangered, candidate or Montana species of special concern).

Guidelines for livestock grazing management

The guidelines are grazing methods and practices that help land managers and grazing permittees achieve the standards.

Guideline #1- Grazing will be managed in a manner that will maintain the proper balance between soils, water, and vegetation over time. This balance varies with location and management objectives, historic use, and natural fluctuations, but acceptable levels of use can be developed that are compatible with resource objectives.

Guideline #2 - Manage grazing to maintain watershed vegetation, species richness, and floodplain function. Maintain riparian vegetation cover and structure to trap and hold sediments during run-off events to build streambanks, recharge aquifers, and dissipate flood energy. Grazing management should promote deep-rooted herbaceous vegetation to enhance streambank stability. Where non-native species are contributing to proper functioning conditions, they are acceptable. Where potential for palatable woody shrub species (*willows*, *dogwood*, *etc.*) exists, promote their growth and expansion within riparian zones.

Guideline #3 - Pastures and allotments will be managed based on their sensitivity and suitability for livestock grazing. Where determinations have not been previously documented, suitability for grazing will be determined by: topography, slope, distance from water, vegetation habitat types, and soil types must be considered when determining grazing suitability. Unsuitable areas should be excluded from grazing.

Guideline #4 - Management strategies for livestock grazing will ensure that long-term resource capabilities can be sustained. End of season stubble heights, streambank moisture content, and utilization of herbaceous and woody vegetation are critical factors which must be evaluated in any grazing strategy. These considerations are essential to achieving long-term vegetation or stream channel objectives and should be identified on a site specific basis and used as terms and conditions.

Guideline #5 - Grazing will be managed to promote desired plants and plant communities of various age classes, based on the rate and physiological conditions of plant growth. Management approaches will be identified on a site-specific basis and implemented through terms and conditions. Caution should be used to avoid early spring grazing use when soils and streambanks are wet and susceptible to compaction and physical damage that occurs with animal trampling. Likewise, late summer and fall treatments in woody shrub communities would be monitored closely to avoid excessive utilization.

Guideline #6 - The development of springs and seeps or other projects affecting water and associated resources shall be designed to protect the ecological functions and processes of those sites.

Guideline #7 - Locate facilities (*e.g., corrals, water developments*) away from riparian-wetland areas.

Guideline #8 - When provided, supplemental salt and minerals should not be placed adjacent to watering locations or in riparian wetland areas so not to adversely impact streambank stability, riparian vegetation, water quality, or other sensitive areas (*i.e., key wildlife wintering areas*). Salt and minerals should be placed in upland sites to draw livestock away from watering areas and to contribute to more uniform grazing distribution.

Guideline #9 - Noxious weed control is essential and should include: cooperative agreements, public education, and integrated pest management (*mechanical, biological, chemical*).

Guideline #10 - Livestock management should utilize practices such as those referenced by the NRCS published prescribed grazing technical guide to maintain, restore or enhance water quality.

Guideline #11 - Grazing management should maintain or improve habitat for federally listed threatened, endangered and sensitive plant and animals.

Guideline #12 - Grazing management should maintain or promote the physical and biological conditions to sustain native populations and communities.

Guideline #13 - Grazing management should give priority to native species. Non-native plant species should only be used in those situations where native seed is not readily available in sufficient quantities, where native species cannot maintain or achieve the standards, or where non-native plant species provide an alternative for the management and protection of native rangelands.

Guideline #14 - Allotment monitoring determines how on-going management practices are affecting the rangeland. To do so, the evaluations should be based on: 1. measurable management objectives; 2. permanent and/or repeatable monitoring locations; and, 3. short-term and long-term data.

Appendix D – Plan Conformance - Applicable parts

West HiLine Land Use Plan Decisions

Soils - BLM will maintain or improve soil productivity by reducing erosion and increasing vegetative cover.

Prior to approval of any surface disturbing activities, BLM will evaluate the activity and if necessary, require mitigation.

Surface disturbance on riparian areas and floodplains will have specific riparian objectives written into the authorizations.

Water Resources - Surface and groundwater quality will be maintained to meet or exceed minimum state and federal water quality standards.

BLM, in cooperation with other agencies, will recommend in stream flows on the Missouri River to protect stream morphology and biological and recreational uses.

BLM will improve or maintain vegetative cover, especially on highly erosive soils, to reduce runoff.

Wetlands will be protected in accordance with provisions of Executive Order #11990.

Vegetation - BLM will maintain lands that are in good or excellent ecological condition and lands in fair or poor condition will be managed according to multiple use objectives based on ecological site potential for specific uses.

All vegetation increases will be allocated to watershed until soils are stabilized at a satisfactory condition as determined by an interdisciplinary team prior to increasing livestock or wildlife allocations.

Allotments in predominately fair ecological range condition should have grazing methods which periodically defer early use (April 1-May 15). Grazing methods and land treatments in selected areas will be implemented as necessary, to improve cover and reduce soil compaction.

A minimum rest period of two growing seasons will be required after any major disturbance to vegetation communities. More rest may be required depending on the situation. Major disturbances are defined as mechanical manipulations of rangeland such as seeding, chiseling and fire.

BLM will maintain a diversity of forbs, grasses and shrubs on antelope range through proper livestock stocking rates and grazing methods.

Livestock grazing methods (which may include the termination of grazing by October

31st) will be used to maintain sagebrush stands with 15-50% canopy cover and 15 inches in height within 2 miles of sage grouse leks.

Forest products are available for sale outside of wilderness study areas and outside the Upper Missouri National Wild and Scenic River corridor.

BLM will take appropriate fire suppression activity.

Riparian - The major riparian areas within the UMNWSR, will receive priority for intensive management during the life of this plan. Potential riparian sites within the UMNWSR corridor will be inventoried and the Coordinated Resource Activity Plan for the UMNWSR will specify management objectives for these sites.

All manageable riparian areas will have management plans implemented to maintain, restore or improve riparian areas to achieve a healthy and productive ecological condition for maximum long-term benefits and values.

Management will be implemented to obtain 90% of optimum stream bank cover within 4-10 years after implementing the activity plan.

Livestock grazing in specialized, high-use recreation sites along the UMNWSR will be controlled through fencing and/or selective grazing.

All high value waterfowl and fisheries reservoirs will be evaluated to determine the need for permanent or temporary fencing to promote riparian vegetation establishment.

Management plans will be written or revised to contain riparian objectives, to maintain or improve existing riparian communities, and to develop potential riparian areas.

Pastures with riparian areas would not be grazed by livestock during the hot season more than 1 year out of 3 in order to maintain or improve riparian communities to a satisfactory condition. As new information on riparian grazing becomes available, these guidelines may be changed.

Grazing Management - Allotment Management Plans will be developed with multiple-use objectives to enhance vegetation production; maintain and enhance wildlife habitat; protect watersheds; reduce bare ground; and to minimize livestock/recreation conflicts.

Allotment management plans will implement some form of grazing method (rest rotation, deferred rotation, seasonal or other methods).

Existing allotment management plans will be updated as dictated by monitoring results or changes in the livestock operation.

Monitoring data and analysis will be used to ensure grazing management is reaching its objectives. The monitoring data and analysis will be used to allow temporary increases

or decreases in AUMs and to revise allotment management plans.

Crested wheatgrass seedings will be maintained for maximum livestock forage production; 70% of the production may be allocated to livestock when soils are stabilized to a satisfactory condition. Existing seedings will be fenced and restored to maximum production to allow for manageable pastures. Additional crested wheatgrass seedings may be used to consolidate existing scattered stands of crested wheatgrass into a manageable unit. In addition, new seedings will be allowed on allotment where no other option is available to improve the vegetative condition.

Vegetative manipulations will be planned, developed and implemented to ensure that negative impacts to other resources (wildlife, soils, range and watershed) are identified and mitigated. Treatments will be applied if maintenance or improvement cannot be achieved with grazing management practices.

BLM will control, eradicate and/or contain noxious plant infestations.

Blue grama-clubmoss rangelands may be treated by mechanical means (chisel plowing or scalping) where improvement cannot be attained by using a grazing method.

Wildlife & Fisheries - BLM will maintain and enhance habitat for wildlife. The emphasis for habitat maintenance and development will be placed on present and potential habitat for sensitive, threatened and/or endangered species, raptors, nesting waterfowl, game birds, fisheries and crucial big-game winter ranges.

BLM will minimize or prevent road and trail development on crucial deer and sharptailed grouse habitat areas.

Livestock water developments will not be built on the terminal portions of finger ridges in the Missouri River Breaks if analysis identifies deer/livestock competition.

Habitat enhancements (islands, nesting platforms) will be constructed on new or existing reservoirs, ponds, potholes or river systems where feasible.

Expansion of big-game populations into existing but previously unoccupied habitat may occur.

BLM will use grazing methods to enhance bighorn sheep habitat and allow their expansion in the Missouri Breaks.

No action will be initiated on BLM administered lands which will jeopardize any federally listed threatened and endangered plant or animal.

BLM will work with the USFWS to recover threatened and endangered species, including reintroduction efforts. The species of interest are the bald eagle, peregrine falcon, black-footed ferret and piping plover.

A cooperative agreement to transplant bighorn sheep into the Little Bullwhacker, Cow Creek area will be pursued with MDFWP. No changes in livestock class to domestic sheep will be allowed in areas occupied by bighorn sheep.

Impacts to sensitive species and state designated species of special interest will be evaluated and applicable mitigation developed prior to the initiation of any action on public lands.

Prairie Dog towns smaller than 10 acres will not be actively managed.

Livestock grazing methods (which may include the termination of grazing by October 31st) will be used to maintain sagebrush stands with 15-50% canopy cover and 15 inches in height within 2 miles of sage grouse leks.

Recreation - BLM will maintain the recreational quality of public lands by providing opportunities for fishing, hunting, sightseeing, hiking, snow sports and other outdoor opportunities.

BLM will provide recreation access maps and brochures to promote better sportsman/landowner relations.

BLM will strive to improve public access to rivers with priority on the Missouri River.

In Class I VRM areas (wild sections of the UMNWSR Corridor) the level of change to the natural landscape from management activities should be very low and must not attract attention.

Maintain/enhance recreational and visual quality along the river system.

The Upper Missouri National Wild & Scenic River will be managed to protect and preserve the remarkable scenic, recreational, geological, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural and other values as directed by Congress in the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

Guidance from the State Director's Interim Guidance for Managing the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument (June 2001)

Management policies, designations and allocations from existing plans will be maintained until completion of the monument resource management plan (RMP), except where changes are necessary to comply with the Proclamation and to protect the objects of scientific and historic interest within the monument. In general, actions that are not precluded by the Proclamation and which do not conflict with the established purposes of the monument may continue, subject to compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, and other laws.

Activities will be restricted where: the BLM identifies places where such uses ought to be restricted or prohibited as necessary to protect the federal land and resources, including objects protected by the monument designation; or where the BLM finds a clear threat from such a use to the federal lands and resources, including the objects protected by the monument designation and the circumstances call for swift protective action.

Watershed plans will address the BLM's implementation of Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management. The BLM will continue with these watershed plans consistent with the Proclamation and the interim management guidance.

Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management practices will be followed to protect rangeland resources, and where necessary, to mitigate any conflicts with other monument uses and values. Administrative actions will be implemented under existing regulation to assure compliance with existing permit/lease requirements, monitoring and supervision of grazing use, and enforcement actions in response to unauthorized use. Completed watershed plans will be implemented as part of this guidance to meet Standards for Rangeland Health.

The BLM will continue to monitor, inventory and take control actions on noxious weed infestations within the monument.

The BLM will conduct rangeland and riparian health assessments as part of the ongoing watershed planning process for implementation of Standards and Guidelines.

Maintenance of existing projects (livestock, watershed and wildlife developments) can occur in the same general manner and degree as they have been in the past. Grazing management facilities, included in completed watershed plans and analyzed through the NEPA process, will be implemented as part of this guidance to meet Standards and Guidelines. Other projects will only be constructed where detailed NEPA assessments demonstrate that they would not have an adverse impact on monument resources protected by the Proclamation.

Vegetation manipulation projects (such as spiking) will be reviewed on a case by case basis. There are areas of crested wheatgrass seedings within the monument that will be managed to native species to restore natural ecological functions as funding and priorities allow. Planting non-native plants will only be allowed when native species are not available for emergency protection such as following fires. Non-native species would be limited to those such as cereal grains that do not have long-term viability for the site.

Archaeological and historic sites, historic landscapes and legal traditional public uses of the monument will be preserved to the extent practical and consistent with other goals in the establishment of the monument.

The monument will be managed in partnership with citizens, landowners, organizations, and volunteers, building on the tradition of local stewardship of the area.

